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LECTURES

ON THE

MILLENNIUM.

DELIVERED IN THE REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH, YONKERS, IN SEPTEMBER
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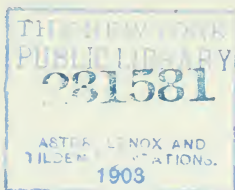
REV. ROBERT KIRKWOOD.

Published by Request.

“Despise not Prophecyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”
1st THESS. v. 20.

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Heaven



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YONKERS, Nov. 6th, 1855.

REV. MR. KIRKWOOD :—

DEAR SIR: Your Lectures on the Millennium have been listened to with deep interest by a number, who think that a still deeper interest would be elicited by their appearance in print.

We think you have presented, in a small compass, a comprehensive and candid exhibition of scriptural testimony on this subject. As a little manual for those who may hereafter feel disposed to give the question a further investigation, we think it might be very useful; and hence our request for the publication.

Respectfully,

H. KINSLEY, M.D.

R. W. VANPELT.

L. W. FLAGG, M.D.

W. HASBROUCK, } Principal of a High
School for Boys.

P R E F A C E .

THE question discussed in the following Lectures is, Whether the Second Coming of Christ will precede or succeed the Millennium. With the exception of a few verbal criticisms on the Greek of the New Testament, the subject is presented in the plain, familiar style of popular discourse. The arguments and illustrations are necessarily brief, being confined to the ordinary time allotted to Sabbath evening exercises. Much is left for the mind of the intelligent reader to supply. If they lead any to a more serious examination of the Bible on this interesting subject—promote the comfort of Christians—and tend to the advancement of the gracious and glorious reign of Christ, it will be in answer to the aims and prayers of

THE AUTHOR.



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LECTURE I.

LITERAL AND FIGURATIVE INTERPRETATION.

I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved. And the Lord answered me, and said : Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie ; though it tarry wait for it ; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him ; but the just shall live by faith. Behold, is it not of the Lord of Hosts, that the people shall labor in the very fire, and shall weary themselves for very vanity ? For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

HAB. I, 1-4, 13, 14.

THE subject announced for this evening's discourse is the Millennium ; but the utmost I can accomplish at this time will be merely to show the importance, of the subject ; or, if by Divine permission, other discourses succeed, only an introduction to a series. It is not improbable that some may deem it presumption for one in my position to attempt such an undertaking ; but if my heart deceive me not, it is not that, but love for the truth that actuates me in this ; and it is only on the importance of the subject, at the present time, and on the Divine blessing on the effort, that I rely for any good result. I can well imagine also, that some views I may advance will have much prejudice to encounter, and that those who possess only a slender knowledge and superficial regard for the authority of Scripture, will not feel the force of the arguments ; but with serious and candid readers of the Bible, I have no

doubt that the subject will increase in interest as we advance. I only further premise that it is no new theory that I propose to present, but one embraced by many of the most pious and learned divines of the present day ; and what is more, held by some of the earliest Fathers in the Christian Church, who wrote in the purest ages of Christianity, even in those immediately succeeding the Apostles, and consequently had the best opportunities of knowing their minds from their writings. But it is not on the fathers, nor councils, nor synods of the church we rely for a rule of faith, but on the scriptures of truth alone, which are older than any of them, and which we have transmitted to us, pure and entire. The following words of the amiable and pious Mr. Ryle, of England, express my present feelings :—

“ The little I know experimentally of the doctrine of Christ’s second coming, makes me regard it as most practical and precious, and makes me long to see it more generally received. I find it a most powerful spring and stimulus to holy living—a motive for patience, moderation and spiritual-mindedness—a test for the employment of time—and a gauge for all my actions.”

In venturing to speak on this topic, the first and strong impression of my mind is, that there is among the majority of professing christians, not only a lamentable indifference in regard to the progress and prospects of Christ’s kingdom on earth, but a vagueness of idea as to its glorious future in that state of it called the Millennium. I can remember more than thirty years ago, that this hope of the church was

the theme of more frequent allusion than it is now. True, there are more publications on the subject ; but then it was more in the minds and mouths of ministers and private christians in their public addresses. I know not why this should be the case. It is still the hope of the church, and “ nearer than when we first believed.” I know of scarcely any subject which, if treated according to its importance and solemnity, might be employed to more advantage as a stirring motive to watchfulness and diligence in our christian warfare.

The learning, research, and judgment of many of the best of men, who have turned their attention to the chronology of prophecy, demand our notice. After patient investigation of prophetic symbols, and the order in which they occur in prophecy, they all agree in their belief that the time is at hand for the downfall of the Papacy. That event is mentioned in immediate connection with the advent of Him who hath “ on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” And then this event, in the order of prophecy, introduces us to the binding of Satan a thousand years. Again, in reference to this advent it is written, “ And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come ; and in this place will I give *peace*, saith the Lord of Hosts.” In connection with these I merely allude, at present, to the actual and prospective agitated state of Europe and Asia as the most strikingly identified with the period designated the shaking of the nations, of any event in the history of the past.

I mention these things as reasons giving weight to the impression on my mind that this subject ought to be brought before the public mind in the practical influence it ought to have on both our christian profession and worldly pursuits. These considerations, by the writings of the Apostles, were pressed upon the consciences of the early christians both as motives to activity and perseverance, and matter of consolation under the severe trials of their faith. If this manner of instruction was appropriate then, surely it is even more so now, after the lapse of eighteen hundred years. Why have we so departed from Apostolic practice?

I am aware that some feel a delicacy in introducing this subject in popular discourse, because some raised expectations have been disappointed, and some confident calculations have failed. But there is danger lest this delicacy may be indulged too long, and even till too late. Indeed we are told this will be the case—that some will be saying “Where is the promise of his coming?” and saying “peace and safety,” when lo! sudden destruction cometh upon them. But what if some calculations have failed? The time which God hath set shall surely come. What if Christ hath said, “It is not for you to know the times and seasons the Father hath put in his own power!” He also said, “Watch, for ye know not the day nor the hour,” and sharply reproved those in his day for not observing “the signs of the times.”

I am aware too, that some waive speaking on this subject because many brethren, beloved, and of high standing, in every denomination differ in opinion in

regard to the means God will employ in introducing, and as to the developments of that period. I appreciate this feeling, and beseech God to bestow on us all more abundant holy love, that we may amicably differ in opinion where we cannot see things exactly in the same light. I am convinced that whatever view we take of this particular subject we do not interfere with any ancient landmarks relative to redemption by the blood of Christ, and renovation by the Holy Spirit, nor infringe on a single article of the common faith and hope of Christians. It being, as yet, a subject of unfulfilled prophecy, perhaps no very certain or definite view of it may be absolutely adopted ; and being one of pure revelation, no speculations of human reason can be safely entertained. On this theme christians may agree to differ, and at the same time cordially unite in every scriptural and reasonable means for gathering out of the nations a people for Christ. At the same time I feel as if the truth on every subject is desirable, and of practical importance ; and if, with the help of the researches of former and living lights and ornaments of the church, and by comparing scripture with scripture for ourselves, together with the light providences afford, we arrive at results in our own mind, on this subject differing from the majority, I see not that it would be dangerous presumption to express them with meekness and candor.

Another cause occurs to me, as probably having the same tendency as those mentioned. The generally received opinion concerning the latter day glory is, that it will be introduced gradually, almost imper-

ceptibly, and consummated by increasing efforts of the church in the extension of the ordinary means already in use, and more copious effusions of the Holy Spirit throughout the world. But instead of this, what do we see? Prevailing apathy in the church — increasing Infidelity — Popery growing more bold — and the principal nations of the world engaged in a general war! This state of things seems to baffle all calculations in regard to the approach of the Millennium; and, in view of the popular idea of it, almost to extinguish hope. Hence seriously inquiring minds longing to see some prospects of better times for the church, sink into despondency, saying, “Alas! that blessed hope seems, as yet, far off in the future,” and hence, perhaps, that general indifference even to speak on the subject.

But are all the prophecies on this subject duly studied, and rightly understood? It is well known that there is a mode of interpretation that gives a view of them differing widely from the one above mentioned, and entertained by men learned and devout in elevated positions in the church. It is known also, that in those controversies wherein christians differ, there are arguments and objections on both sides. Professor Hill, an eminent and candid theologian, in examining the deep points wherein Calvinists and Arminians differ, admitted that there were difficulties lying against each system, and he adopted the former because the difficulties here were not so formidable as those in the latter. Might we not follow this rule in the case before us, and follow neither party implicitly; but apply the sure and simple tes-

timony of the Bible to each ; and if some difficulties still remain, adopt that view wherein they appear the least. In interpreting prophecy it must be that difficulties will occur, and remain for the Millennial light itself fully to solve.

On this subject, as on all others, it is the right of every Christian to think for himself. Yea, it is essentially necessary, as immense evils have arisen in the Christian Church through the neglect of private judgment. Without this, guided by the word of God, we have no security against error. The Church is not infallible. Time was when almost all Christendom embraced the Arian heresy. Time was when the gross darkness of Popery covered the nations of Europe. And time was, in my own recollection, when so-called orthodox Christians argued strongly in favor of the mercantile view of atonement. Even so, in the case before us, may not some who think themselves following the Bible be in mistake, and following only ecclesiastical authority, and in the wake of a party ?

Approaching our subject more directly, I would observe, that, in my opinion, we lose much of the benefit God designed us in a great portion of the Bible, by giving little or no attention to prophecy. We too readily take for granted that it is of little use, further than as an evidence of the Divine inspiration of Scripture, after seeing its accomplishment in the events of the past. This is one grand use of prophecy, but surely it was not all that was designed by it. The design of it, under the old dispensation, was to support the faith, and encourage the hope of ancient

believers in the coming Messiah. This was the practical use of the promises, or prophecies. “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth.” I see no reason why unfulfilled promises and prophecies may not be of the same and equal use to us. The great hope of the church, as much as ever, is that of a coming Christ. It is too much overlooked how very frequently our faith, by way of warning and encouragement, is directed to this event. What the nature of this coming will be, is a question on which christians differ. It is not a difference that at all affects our acceptance with God, and final salvation ; yet it is one that may affect our present action. One views it as a coming to individuals at death, or, as a providential coming to chastise a people for their sin, or, as a gracious and spiritual coming to convert the nations, or, as a personal coming at the end of time, to judge the world. Another regards it as a personal coming “in a cloud with power and great glory,” by visible judgments to destroy all wicked systems—to break, as with a rod of iron, and dash in pieces, as a potter’s vessel, all the kings of the earth who set themselves against him—to raise from their graves all the righteous dead—and to introduce a dispensation, or kingdom on earth of perfect holiness and peace, in which there shall be nothing to hurt or destroy in all his holy mountain. One looks upon all those remarkable prophecies relating to that peculiar people, the Jews, as about to receive their accom-

plishment in their conversion to Christianity, and reception into the visible church of Christ. Another sees in them their *literal* restoration to their own land and city of Jerusalem, and there converted as a nation in a day, when they see by unmistakable tokens, "*Jesus of Nazareth*," as their Messiah, and the inscription on his cross actualized, "*The King of the Jews*."

In regard to these two modes of interpretation, and their results, intelligent christians might find it worth while, in the present day, to give their respective claims upon our attention some careful perusal. As an humble individual, I presume not to dictate, nor call in question, for a moment, the candor of any who adopt either view. I have not the means of information that some have, nor capacity to suggest much new on the subject. Comparing the views, there are, in my mind, some difficulties attaching to each. With much that has been written in favor of pre-millennial views, I disagree ; yet the general outlines of the system have more support from the Bible than many are aware of. If it be the true view, in the light of Scripture, let us adopt it ; if not, a candid examination of it can do us no harm.

I observe, in the course of reading, that the diversity of views here arises in consequence of the literal and figurative modes of interpreting prophecy. It is admitted by all, that much of the Bible is written in a highly figurative style of language, but it is not all so. It would lead to absurdity to interpret all literally ; and it would equally lead to error to explain all figuratively. Here lies the difficulty. How are we

to decide, in particular cases, which interpretation to adopt? In reference to this point, the following is the language of Mr. Ryle, the earnest writer before quoted: "The denunciations against Babylon, and Nineveh, and Edom, and Tyre, and Egypt, and the rebellious Jews, we have been content to take *literally*, and hand them over to our neighbors. The blessings and promises of glory to Zion, Jerusalem, Jacob, and Israel, we have taken *spiritually*, and comfortably applied them to ourselves and the church of Christ. Now I believe this to have been an unfair system of interpreting the scriptures. I believe the first and primary sense of every Old Testament promise, as well as threatening, is the *literal* one, and that Jacob means Jacob, Jerusalem means Jerusalem, and Israel means Israel, as much as Egypt means Egypt, and Babylon means Babylon. This primary sense, I believe, we have sadly lost sight of. We have adapted and accommodated to the church of Christ the promises that were spoken by God to Israel and Zion. I do not mean to say that this accommodation is in no sense allowable. But I do mean to say, that the primary sense of every prophecy and promise in the Old Testament prophecy was intended to have a literal fulfilment, and that this literal fulfilment has been far too much put aside, and thrust into a corner." On this point, Dr. Cumming has the following remark: "Whenever the literal meaning of God's word does not involve absurdity, or contradict itself, I regard it as the true one."

It has been well observed by some one, that the true way to understand the Bible, is to make it its

own interpreter. According to this rule, by comparing past events in the history of Christ's advent in the flesh, with the predictions relating to them, may we not get some cue to discover some great outlines in the future of his kingdom on earth, and learn our duty in the prospect? How was "all that the prophets have spoken" concerning the humiliation and death of Christ fulfilled—literally or figuratively? It is remarkable to observe how *literally* the history corresponds with the prophecy. Hence we wonder at the blindness of that age, which the Saviour so sharply reproved. "O, ye hypocrites! ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" Even his own disciples fell under the same censure. "O, fools! and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter upon his glory? And beginning at Moses he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

This correspondence of the history with prophecy is worthy of some special notice and attention. Beginning at Moses he probably referred them to the first promise concerning "the seed of the *woman*." Take this in connection with the one in Isaiah—"A *virgin* shall conceive and bring forth a son"—and how *literally* were they fulfilled in the miraculous conception of the virgin! The promises that ran in the line of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and David, were *literally* fulfilled when he was born an Israelite, of the tribe of Judah, and family of David. The city of his birth was foretold. The departing of the

sceptre from Judah, and the seventy weeks of Daniel fixed the date of his appearance. These were all fulfilled to the very *letter* of the prophecies. The fifty-third of Isaiah seems more like a history of the Saviour's humiliation and death, and the design of his sufferings, than a prophecy uttered 500 years before. In many passages in the book of Psalms we have, as it were, *literally*, "Christ set forth crucified before our eyes." "Yea, even mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, who did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." "The assembly of the wicked enclosed me, they pierced my hands and feet." "They part my raiment among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." "They gave me gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." Many more such passages might be adduced from the Old Testament were it necessary, in which we can see no figurative allusion or signification. There can be no such thing as allegorizing or spiritualising them away from their plain literal meaning. They were all literally fulfilled. Hence we wonder at the men of that generation that they were so "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken."

One reason of this general misapprehension of the Jews was their want of discrimination between two classes of prophecy, which are distinct in their application. We now know that there are in the Old Testament prophecies relating to events long after, and far beyond anything that was actualized at his first advent. These are not arranged in any chronological order, but often with scarcely any observable transi-

tion, mixed up with those of the other class relating to his first appearance. The same Isaiah who gives such graphic sketches of his humiliation, favors us also in almost the same breath with glowing descriptions of the future glory of his kingdom, and triumphs of his reign on earth. The same David who so pathetically describes his sufferings as an atoning priest, sings of him also as Jehovah's anointed king on the holy hill of Zion ; reigning as a triumphant conqueror, breaking with a rod of iron, and dashing in pieces as a potter's vessel, the kings of the earth who set themselves against him.

In view of these facts some questions naturally arise in our mind. I am no prophet, nor claiming to be an original interpreter ; my object is only to examine systems already set forth, and compare them with Scripture. It occurs to me here to ask, what more excellent way or better mode of interpretation, than to make Scripture explain itself—than to notice the manner in which prophecies *have* been fulfilled, and make that the key to open those that yet look to the future ? In regard to those two classes of prophecy just referred to, why are we to explain the one literally, and the other figuratively or spiritually ? I can see no reason for this. If the predictions concerning Christ as an atoning priest were so literally fulfilled, may we not, without the imputation of wresting Scripture, so interpret those relating to him as reigning in the reconquered territories of Satan the God of this World, and *visibly* manifesting forth his kingly office ? If he was literally crucified on Mount Calvary, may we not thankfully receive the intima-

tion that, when the ends of that death shall have been accomplished, and when, in the language of Isaiah, he shall have “punished the host of the High One that are on high, and the kings of the earth *upon the earth*,” he shall *literally* “reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously?” If, when he had finished making atonement for the sins of his people, he literally and visibly ascended from Mount Olivet to heaven, and having there remained for a season an unseen Saviour, reigning the while in his church through his Spirit; what, if he should, as the angels said, “so *come in like manner* as he went into heaven;” and, as Zechariah said, “stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east?” I see nothing in Scripture or reason to gainsay such an interpretation; it does not involve absurdity, nor contradiction.

Had not the Jews been infatuated with their notions of a temporal deliverer at that time; had their teachers been spiritual men, humbly sitting at the feet of their inspired prophets; had they been prayerful men, laying open their minds to divine teaching, they might have perceived when their king came “*meek and lowly*.” There were a few of this stamp, “waiting for the consolation in Israel,” and “looking for redemption in Jerusalem.” But the great body of the nation, turning away from the *literal* interpretation, knew not the time of their merciful visitation. We live in times somewhat analogous to theirs, on the eve, apparently, of some unprecedented developments of the Divine purposes, and we have need to beware, lest we “fall after the same example of un-

belief." They stumbled at the *meanness* of his first appearing, overlooking the Scriptures that foretold that so it should be. May not the present age be sceptical in regard to the visible manifestations of his *power and glory*, when he comes to reign on Mount Zion, and introduce the Millennium ?

But some may say, this is mere declamation ; it proves nothing. I admit it. I have not yet entered on the examination of the Scripture texts claimed as proof on either side. I said that the utmost I could accomplish in one address, was only to point to the importance of the subject, and to introduce it. I remarked also, that mere ecclesiastical authority was no sure guide, and that without private judgment, guided by the word of God, we have no security against error. If a few minutes more may be allowed me at present, I will close with an illustration of this in my own experience, relating to a prophecy before alluded to, and which I now think has been misunderstood. It is in the prophecy of Hagai, second chapter. "For thus saith the Lord of Hosts, yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land ; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations will come ; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of Hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former, and in this place will I give *peace*, saith the Lord of Hosts." This prophecy, I had long taken for granted, had its full accomplishment in the coming of Christ in the flesh. Thus had I often heard it explained from the

pulpit. In my early religious experience I had opportunities of mingling with pious men who knew the sentiment of the church on these topics, for, as I said, they were more discoursed on then than now. The general opinion then in regard to the millennium, was in accordance with the popular sentiment now. But in regard to the above explanation, I now see real difficulties.

In the first place, for instance, it is said "In this place will I give *peace*." If this prediction referred to the coming of Christ in the flesh, and to the dispensation introduced by his death, it contradicts the saying of the Lord himself, "I come not to send peace on earth, but a sword." The gospel dispensation since its commencement has been a period of the severest trials and persecution. Its characteristic is war. The pure doctrines of the Gospel have been the innocent occasion of many bloody conflicts. It is Christ, by his Spirit in his church, conflicting with principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses in high places; combating with the successive systems of error and delusion introduced by Satan; gathering out of all nations a people for himself, over whom, it appears, he will reign in a more manifest manner in a new and coming dispensation, in which he will give *peace*.

Again, it is said, "Yet once, it is a little, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations will come." If this is interpreted as referring to the first advent of Christ, it contradicts all facts in the case. The time of his first

coming was a time of the greatest peace. The temple of Janus was shut, and the whole world in a state of outward tranquillity. Whatever the coming of the desire of all nations may mean, it seems evidently an event yet future. The best evidence of this is an assertion of the Apostle Paul, evidently referring to this prophecy, where he speaks of it as a promise yet future. Heb. XII., 26. "Whose voice then shook the earth, but *now he hath promised*, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain;" all which plainly teach that this prophecy hath not yet been fulfilled.

Now, in regard to the political commotions that are now shaking the nations of Europe to their centre, it is obvious to remark, that they have overtaken the world by surprise, and greatly disappointed many human expectations. For many years previous to the late revolutions we were flattered by the hope that wars had actually come to an end. Peace societies were laboring to bring about a congress of nations to settle all their quarrels without the sword; and their agents had actually gone to St. Petersburg previous to the breaking out of the war. Improvements about trade and commerce were talked of that were to pacify, and civilize, and almost christianize the world. Iron was withdrawn from the manufacture of cannon for the use of railroads. Christians, echoing the sentiment, thought, that mankind had too much sense ever again to go to war. Behold the contrast! Never

in the memory of man, nor in the annals of history, did the nations of Europe present such a threatening and warlike aspect. Truly it seems to foreshadow the accomplishment of this prophecy. Whatever may be meant by the coming of the desire of all nations, these events seem to indicate its approach. In view of the solemn terms in which this prophecy is announced, and of other scriptures, it will be "a great and notable day."

Hence, as I said, the impresson on my mind is deepened, that it becomes the duty of public teachers to give more attention to the study of prophecy, and warn the people to prepare for it. If the teachings of a single prophecy be so direct and solemn, might not a vast amount of information and instruction be gathered by bringing together and comparing many others to the same effect ;—testifying to the presumption, if not to the fact, that we live in the most eventful and solemn crisis the church or the world ever saw.

LECTURE II.

PRE-MILLENNIAL AND POST-MILLENNIAL VIEWS CONTRASTED AND COMPARED WITH SCRIPTURE.

For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.
Hab. II., 14.

IN the last discourse I introduced the general subject with some remarks, showing that that glorious period of the church designated the Millennium did not occupy a space in the public teaching of the present day proportioned to its importance, that there is an apparent indifference even in regard to speaking of it, and pointed out some of the reasons to which this may be attributed. I then spoke of the uses of prophecy, showing that it was not designed merely as a standing evidence of the Divine inspiration of Scripture, after seeing its accomplishment in history, but also to afford us some glimpses, more or less definite, of the future. A great portion of the Old Testament prophecies pointed directly to the first coming of Christ as the gracious Redeemer of his church, and were designed under all circumstances to support the faith and encourage the hope of ancient believers in view of it; and hence I conceived that unfulfilled prophecies had a similar practical use to us. I next spoke of the two ways of explaining prophecy, viz., the literal and figurative modes of in-

terpretation, and showed how that the predictions relating to Christ's coming in the flesh were accomplished in a most remarkably literal manner; and hence I thought that this might furnish us a key to open those relative to his second coming, and the future glories of his reign on earth.

Proceeding with our subject, it may not be out of place to explain the meaning of the term Millennium, and the general idea attached to it; for so defective has been the public teaching in regard to this, that I suspect one-half of the rising generation have no definite idea in reference to it. Here I would observe briefly, that hitherto the truth of God and the practice of holiness have had very little sway in our sinful world. The clear revelation of the divine will for 4,000 years was confined to a very few; at most to only one obscure nation, while the gentile or heathen world was groping in darkness, and worshipping the works of their own hands. Almost 2,000 years ago the command of the Saviour was to preach the Gospel to all nations; and yet to this day only a very small minority of the human race have heard it, and of that minority only a very few have embraced it; and Satan with almost undisputed sway reigns as god of this world. But amid this moral gloom there are promises and prophecies shining through, that Christ, in his glorious kingdom of truth and holiness, "shall reign from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." "That all kings shall worship before him." "That the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea." This reign, we are told, is to last a thou-

sand years on earth, and hence called the Millennium ; a term derived from two Latin words *mille*, a thousand, and *annum* a year, or that period mentioned in the twentieth chapter of Revelations, during which Satan shall be bound a thousand years.

In regard to the general aspect or features of this period, as I before remarked, there are two theories, each supported by men equally eminent for piety and learning. It will be my object now to give a brief statement of these opposite theories, and as far as I understand them, to state them candidly. The aspects of that age, according to the popular or post-millennial view, seem to be that it will be no very marked period, so far as its introduction and progress for a time are concerned, further than a general prevalence of true piety until the great majority of mankind will be converted to Christ ; that there will still be a considerable number of the opposite character ; that sin, and suffering, and death will more or less mingle in the experience of all ; that it will be nothing more than an expansion of present gospel ordinances, and means of grace and gracious influences carried out into more perfection and with greater energy, until all nations shall be brought to the knowledge and profession of the Gospel ; that the binding of Satan means such a restraint and prostration of his power, that his kingdom on earth, consisting of idolatry, superstition and infidelity, shall be destroyed and disappear ; and that, finally, the result of his being “ loosed for a little season ” will be a gradual and general apostacy from the faith, until the “ great white throne ” is set, and the final judgment takes

place. According to this view there will be no very palpable tokens of either the commencement or termination of the thousand years.

On the other hand, those who adopt the other view, regard the Millennium as a very marked period both in its beginning and ending. The general outlines of their system may also be stated in few words. When the Gospel shall have been "published in all the world for a witness unto all nations," then shall the end come, the end of the present dispensation. Then Christ in some glorious and visible personal appearance shall come "in a cloud with power and great glory." Then all the righteous dead, or the "dead in Christ shall rise first;" and believers who are "alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air, and be changed." In the mean time "the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up." After that we are to "look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness," or in other words, the earth purified by fire as a residence for all the ransomed church of Christ in their resurrection bodies, when they shall "live and reign with him a thousand years," in perfect holiness and peace. "The rest of the dead rise not till the thousand years are finished," and then shortly after shall be brought to judgment.

Such is a brief outline of the pre-millennial view. It is rather a startling one to those who have not read or thought on the subject. Some may regard it as nonsense, or the dream of an enthusiast. As such it appeared to me once, until led by an incident in Providence to give it a more close and

serious investigation, and to compare it with Scripture, it appeared as having more evidence in its favor than many imagine. The more I read and studied books on both sides of the question, in connection with the Bible, my faith in the popular view began to be shaken. It cost me a struggle to relinquish the idea under which I had been trained, and to adopt the other as my private sentiment. When once thus admitted, the Bible seemed more and more full of evidence in favor of it. It threw light on many passages before involved in obscurity, and gave consistency to some apparently contradictory. At length the conviction arose that it may not only be safely indulged as a private sentiment, but that it ought to be publicly discussed; that intelligent christians may search the Scriptures and judge for themselves. Since this process has been going on in my mind, I have ever cherished the utmost charity and candor towards those who differ. When now about to compare the systems together, I hope to make it appear that I am governed neither by prejudice nor whim, nor by ecclesiastical authority, but by the Bible alone. I desire no man to think as I do, except so far as he feels influenced by Scripture.

In the two views set forth it will appear that there is a wide difference both as regards their practical effects and final result. If it can be ascertained which is according to truth, it will be worth while to try. If we can lay aside all prejudices of education, and bias of circumstances, we shall be better prepared to examine and decide the question. It would transcend the limits of our present undertak-

ing to attempt a full investigation; yet a brief glance at the outlines may assist our judgment. If we take the subject by little and little, we may come at length to a clearer conception and comparison of the whole.

Suppose, for instance, we take the case of individual character, and state of society, during that happy period. One regards it as a state of mixed experience, not differing essentially from the present dispensation of grace, further than a mighty preponderance of holiness over sin, and grace over corruption. So long as there is no perfection in holiness, there will be a warfare. Men will come into the world as corrupt as ever. Parents will be mourning over the depravity of children, and grieving over others living and dying in impenitence, even amid all the light afforded. Another views it as a state of sinless purity, and perfect peace — no more sickness to afflict — no more death to alarm — no more curse — “where they neither marry nor are given in marriage, neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels.”

Now what saith the Scripture further? “Thy people shall be *all* righteous.” “They shall know the Lord from the *least* to the *greatest*.” “The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters *cover* the sea.” “From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the gentiles; and in *every* place incense shall be offered to me, and a *pure* offering.” “The inhabitant shall not say, I am *sick*, for the people that dwell therein shall be for-

given their iniquities." "There shall in no wise enter any thing that *defileth*." Isaiah, lx. 31; Jer. xxxi. 34; Heb. ii. 14; Mal. i. 11; Isaiah xxxiii. 24; Rev. xxi. 27. If we allow the Bible to mean just what it says — if with all our present knowledge of language, and unbiased by any particular mode of interpretation, we came to read for the first time such passages as these, would we not conclude them to be a description of a state of unmixed society — a population of pure and holy worshippers? But it is a specimen, and a very small specimen, of the language usually employed and interpreted to express the latter day glory.

But, it may be objected that the statement last given of the Millennium is not a fair representation — that parts of it are taken from the last two chapters of Revelations, which the church in all ages has regarded as a symbolical representation of the eternal state of bliss, when this world shall have passed away, and when time shall be no more. To this it may be replied, that there are passages in these two chapters that will not admit of this explanation. "I, John, saw the holy city *coming down* from God, out of Heaven, as a bride adorned for her husband." "And I heard a great voice out of Heaven, saying, the tabernacle of God is *with men*." Again the angel said, "Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. . . . And he shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, *descending* out of Heaven, from God." If this were a description of some state of glory after the earth had been burned up, or annihilated, and "death and hell cast into the

lake of fire," we might, in our ordinary acceptation of language, have expected it would have been the bride *ascending* up into Heaven to God. Hence, it is no settled point, as I will try to make appear afterwards, that these two chapters represent anything beyond what may be realised during the Millennium on earth.

It may be asked again, on the other hand, is there no description of Heaven in the Bible? What have we left to help our conceptions of the upper sanctuary if these representations in the last of Revelations are not designed for this end? To this it may be answered, what after all is Heaven, but the manifested glory of God, and presence of Emmanuel? It is not a state only but a place; and where Christ is, there is Heaven. I would rather be on earth with Christ, than anywhere else without him. Glorified saints with bodies "fashioned like unto his own glorious body," must have a place to dwell in. Where, in the universe of God, is that place to be? May not this earth, purified by the last fires, be the most fitting abode for their reception? Heaven, if it mean a place for the blessed, far away in the depths of unknown space, can scarcely agree with the promise of new heavens, and a new *earth*. May not the new heavens and a new earth mean the renovation of the "earth that now is," and holding the same location in space? This is no new idea, I have met with it in learned and pious writers of former times; and there are passages in Dr. Chalmers' writings which show that, in this respect, he was latterly what is called a millennarian. Take the following as an example

from his writings :—" There is much of the innocent, much of the inspiring, and much to affect and elevate the heart in the scenes and conditions of materialism, and in the predictions of that text, that, after the dissolution of its present frame-work, the earth will be made and adapted to new creatures, in all the graces of its first formation ; and that in addition to our direct and personal view of the Deity, when he comes down to tabernacle with man, we shall also have the reflection of Him in a lovely mirror of His own workmanship ; and that, instead of being transported to a state of dimness and mystery, so remote from human experience as to be beyond all comprehension, we shall forever dwell in a place replenished with those sensible delights, and sensible glories, which, we doubt not, will be most profusely scattered over a new heaven and a new earth. But, though a Paradise of sense, it will not be a Paradise of sensuality. . . . There will be a firm earth as we have at present, and a heaven stretched over it, as we have at present ; and it is not by the absence of these, but the absence of sin, that the abodes of immortality will be characterised. . . . These will be days of love and universal peace, when the very animals will cease to devour each other. . . . Can this be, that in the Millennium there will be no more death ? Surely they who partake in the first resurrection will not die over again."

To all this those in the other view may still reply — We have no special objection to the general view here given. We know there is a Heaven for the righteous, but of the actual " scenes and conditions " of that

state, we can have no clear conception, "For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered the heart of man, what God hath prepared for them that love him." True, glorified bodies must have a place, but where, we cannot tell. We have no great objection to the idea of this earth purified by the last fires becoming a "place prepared" for them. But then, that conflagration takes place after the Millennium.

Here, in regard to that awful day, "the day of the Lord, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up," the two views are, in point of time, a thousand years apart! This has been a most solemn thought to me, that holy men of God, faithful ministers of Christ, and interpreters of his word, should vary so much in their calculations. According to one class of interpreters it is away in the far distant future, more than a thousand years off. According to another class, it is literally at hand, and may come on us "like a thief in the night"—even on us of the present generation! Which, oh! which are in the right? Surely, this is a question of mighty moment to each one of us. If we would only admit the bare possibility that the latter is the true view—that these holy men, who solemnly and sincerely warn us, are in the right, it might influence us much in our christian profession and wordly pursuits. On this question there is no room for the speculations of human reason. The *Bible*—the *Bible alone*, must be our guide. Let us use it with a prayerful heart, and teachable spirit.

Our great and first care in argument and criticism ought to be, to distinctly define terms, and to abide by the definition. There is, in the Scripture last quoted a phrase of very solemn import. "*The day of the Lord.*" What are we to understand by it? Does it invariably mean one period, and refer to the same event; or, does it have reference to various periods, and occurrences? I am disposed to think, that in the Bible, which God designed as a plain instructor to the simple, and which means just what it says, such an emphatic phrase — "*The day of the Lord,*" had some definite meaning, and referred us always to the same period — and that period the one described in this Scripture, in connection with the conflagration of the earth. The phrase occurs, I suppose, more than twenty times in the Old Testament, and several times in the New. In the former, it occurs sometimes in connection with desolating judgments on the lands, or with the destruction of wicked cities and nations; but this will not prove that there is more than one period called emphatically, "*The day of the Lord.*"

These former awful judgments may be regarded as types and shadows of the latter, even as some prophecies eminently referring to Christ, had a temporary or primary fulfilment in David and Solomon. I have had it objected that these occurrences of the terms in the Old Testament could not refer to the coming of Christ, or the last day, because they had their accomplishment in the judgments referred to. As well may they say, that the seventy-second Psalm had no reference to the kingdom of Christ, as it was

fulfilled in the extent and glory of Solomon's reign. Is it said that there are expressions in that psalm which could not possibly refer to Solomon? Just so there are terms in these descriptions of the day of the Lord that cannot apply to any temporal or local judgments on the earth in any times or occurrences of the past. Although called a day, and the great day, probably we are not to limit it to the brief space of a natural day. I would consider it as a solemn period in Providence, in which several great occurrences are to take place; and is sometimes spoken of in reference to one, and sometimes to another of these.

I may here state, that, in my former experience, when I came to such phrases as these, in the Bible — the day of the Lord — the great day — the great and dreadful day of the Lord, they invariably became associated in my mind with the end of time — the winding up, as it were, of the affairs of God's government in this world. But now, on a closer examination, I cannot make these two periods synchronize — the day of the Lord with the end of time. I will now quote a passage or two, showing the impossibility of reconciling them.

The first is the second and third chapters of Joel. "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered, for in Mount Zion and Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call. For behold, in those days, and in that time, when I bring again

the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage, Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land." How manifestly this relates to the restoration of the Jews! The prophecy continues — "Proclaim ye this among the gentiles: Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: Beat your ploughshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble yourselves and come up all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause the mighty ones to come down, O! Lord. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle for the harvest is ripe: come get you down for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great." How very similar this language to the fourteenth chapter of Revelation, relating to a period previous to the Millennium! The prophecy goes on: "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision; for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The Lord shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion my holy mountain; then shall

Jerusalem be holy, and then shall no strangers pass through her any more." It would be absurd and I think, to interpret the terms Israel and Jerusalem here as referring to Christians and the Christian church. Here, then, you perceive the day of the Lord distinctly associated with the restoration of the Jews; and a scene as similar as a separate writer could be supposed to describe it, to the battle of Armageddon in the book of Revelations; all which takes place before the binding of Satan, or the Millennium.

The next I quote is Zech. xiv. "Behold the day of the Lord cometh"—and what are the results? "Thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee; for I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle. . . . Then shall the Lord go forth and fight with those nations. . . . And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east. . . . And the Lord shall be king in all the *earth*; in that day shall there be one God, and his name one." I quote only parts of this prophecy. Now what have we here as the results of the period in question? The same battle of the nations—the advent of Christ—and a glowing description of the Millennium. I cannot see how the day of the Lord here can be consistently defined as the day of final doom to the wicked, and the end of time.

I now turn to a passage or two in the New Testament that give us the same results. The first is that in 2 Thess., chapter ii. and familiar to many of you. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel

of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power." This I had been accustomed to regard, without any question at all, as the winding up of the affairs of this world, and the end of time. But does the succeeding context admit of this interpretation? I think not. "Now we beseech you brethren," continues the apostle, "by the coming of the Lord Jesus, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in your mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, or by letter as from us as that the *day of Christ* is at hand." What do you think is the reason of this caution, not to be soon shaken in mind and troubled? In other instances, according to our translation, he uses the same expression, the day of the Lord is at hand, or draweth near, without interposing such a caution. The reason is seen by a little Greek criticism. Any Greek scholar may perceive that the Greek word used here is different from that in the others. In the latter case the word is properly translated, draweth near, or is at hand. In the case before us it ought to be rendered — the day of Christ is present or already come. The meaning is—"Be not soon shaken in your mind nor be troubled as if the day of Christ were already come, or is now present." It appears from this, and it is the opinion of commentators, that the early Christians, in view of what Paul had written in the first epistle, and of the troublous times in which they lived, and of the dark aspects of Providence hanging over the Jewish nation, were under the impression that "the day of the Lord, the year of recompenses

for the controversies of Zion," predicted in the Old Testament, had already come, or was imminent. But the apostle warns them against this mistake, against being deceived or troubled in regard to that day, by informing them of a long train of events that must occur before Christ, or the day of Christ should come. "Let no man deceive you," he says, "by any means, for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first," or, as it might be better rendered, "except there come first *the apostacy*, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition," etc. Here follows the well-known prophetic description of the Poppedom, even as if it had been written with a historic pen. There can be no rational doubt of that being a prophecy of the Papacy. Now the question here is, How long is that apostate or wicked system to last? The apostle answers the question: "Until that Wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of his mouth, and destroy by the brightness of his coming." What coming? Manifestly that coming just before spoken of, and about which the Thessalonians had been troubled. How long, I ask again, is the Papacy to continue? Will it exist throughout the thousand years of the Millennium? Nobody believes that it will. That Wicked is being consumed. Some think that the last pope is on the throne, but I have nothing to say as to this. It will last only till Christ comes. I have searched and cannot find a word in Paul, or in the teachings of our Lord himself on the subject, that gives the least intimation of a long, long period of peace and purity for the church intervening between

his first and second coming, but everything to the contrary. That day of the Lord then, if compared in its descriptions in the Old Testament, you may perceive, is identically the same as that described by Paul, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, in flaming fire, to destroy Popery.

I refer you to only one more passage in this connection, exhibiting the occurrences already specified, as characterizing that period designated the day of the Lord. It is the 19th chapter of Revelations. I will not detain you by reading or commenting on it, but only mention these occurrences in their order, as any reader may perceive by a careful perusal. Some present will not recollect, but intelligent Christians will remember the summary of events. After the detail of the fall of Babylon, or the Papacy, in the 18th chapter, we have the rejoicing of the righteous on that event — the advent of Christ — the armies of the beast and of the kings of the earth, and their destruction — then the binding of Satan, or the Millennium. Now let me show you how the descriptions here coincide with the Old Testament representations of the day of the Lord. There we have such passages as these : “ For this is the day of the Lord God of Hosts, a day of vengeance that he may avenge himself of his adversaries, and the sword shall devour, and it shall be saturate, and made drunk with their blood.” “ For the Lord God hath a sacrifice in the north by the river Euphrates.” Many such passages might be quoted, but compare these with the passage under review. “ He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood ” — the symbol of a warrior — “ and his name

was called the Word of God" — a designation of Christ according to John elsewhere — "and the armies which were in heaven followed him" — equivalent to Zechariah, He shall come and all his saints with him — "and out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture, and on his thigh, a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS." The invitation which follows to the fowls of heaven to come and gather themselves together unto the supper of the great God to eat the flesh of kings, etc., is a fac simile of one in the 39th of Ezekiel describing events of the last days.

I merely quote these passages hoping they may solemnly affect your minds in view of the events they describe, and which appear, in the aspects of Divine Providence, as coming on the world, and casting their shadows before. These are not what I have been accustomed to regard as scenes introductory to the Millennium. They are not descriptive of peaceful victories of the gospel *gradually* overspreading the nations of the earth — gently subduing them by the mild influence of divine grace and truth, and so introducing the reign of universal peace. But they are descriptive of the antecedents and concomitants of the binding of Satan, according to the Revelations of Saint John.

But again, those who favor post-millennial views may say, We have admitted the possibility of the earth regenerated by the last fires, becoming a para-

dise of bliss for resurrection bodies ; but how can this be, while it is still needed for mortal bodies, for men in the flesh during the thousand years ? How can this be possible till after “ the resurrection at the last day ? ” And the new heavens and a new earth, for which Saint Peter teaches us to look after the conflagration, do not they point us to the eternal state of blessedness for the righteous beyond the scenes of the final judgment ?

As a general answer, here I remark, that there are many questions that may be put on this subject which we are not called to answer. We must not meddle with details. In doing this some Millennarian writers have erred, and injured the cause they would defend. If we can get hold of some grand outlines of the future, it is all we are allowed to expect from prophecy. God has given us these in the Bible in some terms which we ought to study and compare with reverence and humility. But I do not mean these remarks as evading the question here. What, after all, is meant by a new heavens and a new earth ? They are terms by which the holy spirit of inspiration designed to convey some definite idea. I should think they always mean one and the same thing, and not two. What would be the use of a revelation in which the same expression conveyed two or more distinct ideas ? Some commentators, those in the popular view, would have the phrase under review to signify two things. The expression new heavens and a new earth occurs only four times in the Bible, twice in the Old Testament, and twice in the New, and they interpret those in the former to mean the millennial state

on earth, and by the latter they understand the heavenly state of eternal glory. But is it safe or lawful to use such liberty with the language of the Holy Ghost? In Isaiah in the 65th and 66th chapters, they evidently describe a state of things on earth as any one may see by consulting the context. They are there in the form of a promise: "Behold I create new heavens and a new earth;" and, "The new heavens and a new earth, which I *will make*." Compare this with 2 Peter, iii., the passage referred to: "Looking for, and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless we, according to his *promise*, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." *What promise?* Most evidently the promise in Isaiah, for there is no other such promise in the Bible. By what authority can we make the prospect in Peter to mean anything else? Our time now this evening urges us to be very brief on the argument.

Here, then, you see we have the same order of events throughout. In Joel, the day of the Lord coming, and Jerusalem restored. In Zechariah, the day of the Lord coming, and the succeeding glory and holiness on earth. In Paul, the day of Christ coming to destroy Popery and all wicked systems. In Peter, the day of God, the heaven and earth on fire, then the new heavens and a new earth, or the Millennium. In John, the advent of the Word of God, the battle of the great day, then the binding of Satan a thousand years.

In regard to the expression, new heavens and a new earth, I have something further to add, but must defer at present. In conclusion, I do not suppose that, by the brief observations to which I am confined in these lectures, I can bring full conviction to your mind. I would not give much for a conviction so easily produced. If I could awaken inquiry, so as to examine the Bible for yourselves, my object would be gained. It is a subject which requires much reading, study, and careful comparison of Scripture with Scripture. My former habits of thinking led me to a cautious reception of the view. It cost me at first some mental struggle, and a serious investigation of nearly three years. Besides, the subject is not yet half exhausted. The second coming of Christ — the first resurrection—the restoration of the Jews, are each important topics in the general subject ; and as I examined each in turn by the test of Scripture, they led my mind, by accumulative evidence, to the same conclusion.

If you will indulge me a few moments longer, I would briefly express my feelings and fears as to the whole subject, thus far. My fears are, lest those who shut their eyes to this subject may be left to greater darkness. These views, I believe, are contained in the Bible, and were plainly expressed by those early Fathers in the Church who wrote in the purest period of it, viz., in that immediately succeeding the apostles. But they were lost sight of afterwards in consequence of the introduction of a figurative mode of interpreting Scripture, which resulted in the growth of the Romish church ; and which is still

preferred and followed by Romish writers. My impression is that our Protestant churches are not yet free from Romish tendencies, and, among others, from that overweening deference to ancient ecclesiastical authority—to what the church, or the majority of the church says. I respect ecclesiastical authority, but not so far as to have it interpret the Bible for me. I honor the standards of the Reformed churches ; and fully believe that on the grand doctrines of redemption by the blood of Christ, as applied by the Holy Spirit, and on the necessity of the new birth, they are clear and scriptural. But on the doctrine of the second coming of Christ, I must be allowed to differ from the majority. I have said that our view of it is not a saving doctrine ; but at the same time I hold it as practical and precious —although one over which the church has been slumbering and sleeping. But I think that on this they will not be allowed to slumber very long. It is a discussion, this, that in my opinion, must come up, and the sooner the better. There may be some apology for this apathy in times past, but in view of the present solemn providential dispensations in the world, it is a sin to be silent. These trumpet-toned Providences that seem to be gathering the nations to the battle of the great day, utter a warning voice to the church, saying, “ Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.” Prophecies and Providences shed mutual light on each other ; and hence, as I said, my fears in regard to those who shut their eyes on both, lest they be left to greater darkness, and to fold their hands, saying, “ Where is the promise of his coming ?”

LECTURE III.

PRACTICAL INFLUENCE OF PRE-MILLENNIAL VIEWS.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night ; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat ; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up. Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat ? Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth. 2 Peter, iii., 10-13.

I CLOSED the last lecture with a few observations on the remarkable expression, new heavens and a new earth. I shall not progress far in the general argument this evening, but, after finishing what I have to say on this topic, pause to consider a question sometimes agitated, viz., the practical effects of pre-millennial views, and the duties they suggest.

I have noticed the occurrences of the expression, new heavens and a new earth, in Isaiah and Peter. In the first, it is in the form of a promise, evidently referring to a state of things on earth. In the other it is introduced in reference to that promise, and I could see no argument why it should relate to any other state. There is another occurrence of the terms in Rev. xxi., 1 : " And I saw new heavens and a new earth, for the first heavens and the first earth had passed away." It is said there is a difficulty in reconciling this with the view we have taken,

in the fact, that in the order of reading it follows the account of the final judgment when the devil, and death, and hell, and the wicked, were "cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death." But the difficulty is no less in the other view. In deciding here, we may apply a rule before suggested, viz., that when there are difficulties on each side of a question, sound wisdom would suggest to adopt that in which they were the least formidable. The question here is, Do the new heavens and a new earth denote the millennial state on earth, or an after state, at the end of the thousand years?

If we take the terms to signify the latter, what is the objection to the view? I merely hinted at an objection in the course of remark formerly. Admit, as all believe, that there is a place called heaven that now exists—a place of more direct manifestations of the Divine presence—a place where Jesus is—where the holy angels minister around the throne—and where all the ransomed church since the fall are congregated. No matter what the nature of it is exactly, nor where it is. It is above. "If ye be risen with Christ seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above." "He hath ascended up on high." Now, the vision which John saw had special reference to the consummation of that gracious union which subsists between Christ and all the redeemed. "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." I suppose you all admit that Christ's parables of the marriage of the king's son, and of the wise and foolish virgins, refer

us to the completion of the redeemed church in glory. "The Bridegroom came, and they that were *ready* went in with him to the marriage ; and the door was *shut*." The principal object in the new heavens and new earth was the "bride, the Lamb's wife," "the holy city, the new Jerusalem *coming down from God out of heaven*, prepared as a bride adorned to meet her husband:" that is, evidently, the ransomed church *completed*. The dead in Christ are raised, and the living changed. The souls of believers have rejoined their bodies. The Lord is come and all the saints with him, descending out of heaven from God to earth, to live and reign together a thousand years. In reference to this idea there is a remarkable expression in chap. v. 10, in the song of the redeemed in heaven, "Thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests ; *and we shall reign on earth*." If language and composition are to be taken in their usual acceptation, this seems the rational interpretation. If during the thousand years the conversion of sinners goes on, the church will not be completed till the end of that period. The marriage of the Lamb has not come till then ; nor till then has his wife made herself ready. But mark, this quotation is a note in the general song of praise to God after the destruction of Babylon, and is found in chap. xix. 7, and consequently *previous* to the binding of Satan. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him ; for the marriage of the Lamb *is* come, and his wife *hath* made herself ready." Again, if this vision were a representation of the church at the end of the thousand years, carried up into heaven, and *there* presented a

glorious church, we might expect the language to have been, I saw the holy city *going up to God in heaven*—the bride, 'the Lamb's wife, *ascending to God in heaven*, and not *descending from God out of heaven*; or, as it is in another place, "The New Jerusalem which *cometh down* out of heaven from my God."

Another objection to taking the new heaven and a new earth as a descriptive metaphor of a future state of bliss in eternity, is one already noticed. It is taking too much liberty with such a remarkable expression, which in Isaiah so evidently means the millennial state on earth, and which Peter uses as most evidently referring to the same thing. It is too much like a forced construction of Scripture to make it speak the language of a theory. Let the Bible speak for itself. "Thus saith the Lord, Behold I create new heavens and a new earth," without referring to the process, but only to the result. Peter tells us it is by a process of fire that this regeneration of the earth is to be effected, after "the first heavens and the first earth have passed away" in the conflagration.

The only objection I have seen urged against the view that regards the new heavens and a new earth here, as representing the church during the millennium is, that in the order of reading it follows the account of the last judgment. This seems only a weak objection, if we consider the outline of events sketched in the preceding prophecy. In the nineteenth chapter we have the songs of the multitudes in heaven and earth, in view of the overthrow of Babylon—the advent of the Word of God, and the battle of the great

day. In the twentieth chapter is the binding of Satan—the final judgment of the wicked and its results. Thus endeth the history of this world. The course of time is finished, and the destinies of all fixed forever and ever. The question is, what is the object of the last two chapters? Is it to carry our view beyond that period into an incomprehensible eternity? This seems doubtful. If Paul, in his rapt vision of the third heavens, “heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter,” I begin to think that that state cannot be brought down to our conception by any symbols. Besides, as before remarked, there are some things in these chapters that cannot well be reconciled with anything beyond scenes and experiences on earth: and the date of them, if I may so speak, does not agree with the idea of anything beyond. “Seal not the prophecy of this book, for the *time is at hand—surely I come quickly.*” But if the apostle, or the spirit of inspiration, after leading us through a chain of events in the course and close of time, it is not difficult to suppose him reverting back, in a more particular representation of that last glorious dispensation of the church on earth, so briefly noticed in the preceding chapter.

Endeavoring, thus far, to discover the foundation in Scripture for the opinions on each side of this interesting question, I have considered, at some length, two forms of expression on which they differ, viz., “The day of the Lord,” and the “new heavens and a new earth,” and to what conclusion do we come? In regard to the popular view, viz., that the day of the Lord means the general resurrection and final judgment of

all mankind, after the thousand years are finished : and that the new heavens and a new earth, in Peter and Revelations, mean the heavenly state into which the righteous shall pass when that scene closes, all my prejudices of education and deference to ecclesiastical authority, would go to favor it. These solemn and more specific accounts we have considered, together with some of our Lord's parables, and many other allusions in the Bible to that solemn day of accounts, I had been accustomed, as a matter of course, to transfer away forward to an indefinitely distant future. But now, on a closer study of the whole subject, I see no inconsistency in referring them to the pre-millennial coming of Christ. That coming, as I will show more fully afterwards, will be equivalent to a judgment day. It will fix the state of all mankind. It will show to the universe who are the approved and righteous, and who are not.

Our opinions, or convictions in favor of the pre-millennial doctrine will influence our views in regard to many passages of Scripture, but not unfavorably. If the subject, with all its due importance, be brought before the mind, it will have a tendency to set us a thinking and examining the scriptures for ourselves, and if it do this, it will do us good. And if the observations in these lectures, expressing the train of thought through which I have been led, will influence any one to enter upon such an examination, or assist him in an inquiry after truth, I will consider my effort as not in vain, and assure him it will not be labor lost on his own part.

Before proceeding further in this comparison of

views, I pause to consider a question that may have arisen in some minds, viz., What effect these pre-millennial views have on our relative duties, personal piety, and christian experience? I have found that it is never too late to learn; nor to examine over again the foundations of our belief. I profess no very critical skill in Scripture; but there is a common-sense view of them, that every one of common understanding is to blame if he do not study. Experimental knowledge here, is preferable to critical acumen; and the testimony of an enlightened conscience, to the approbation of a whole community. I try to find on what foundation the popular view on this subject rests, and I confess that this common-sense view of the word of God, taking it just as it reads, has shaken my confidence in it. And is it asked, "What are the practical results?" answer, in every way favorable to personal religion. I can perceive no evil tendency in the pre-millennial views. No lawful or laudable pursuit or business of life needs to be suspended. If a christian, and acting for the glory of God, the mechanic in his shop, the trader at his counter, or the merchant at his desk, is as safe, and prepared for the coming of Christ, as if he were at devotion in his closet, or worshipping in the sanctuary. If I knew that the day of the Lord would come next year, or next month, I would say, "Let every man abide in his calling." When I see strong and costly buildings raised, I think sometimes of the fires that may consume them; yet I would not say, Build not; plant not. "But this I would say, brethren, the time is short. It remaineth that they who weep, be as

though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it. For the fashion of this world passeth away." (1 Cor. vii., 29-31.)

And if the general publication of this view might be a further means of producing a more sober spirit, and a more moderate and temperate pursuit of the honor and wealth of this world, it would be no more than the Bible requires—no more than any other opinion on this particular subject requires—no more than the uncertainties of life, and the awful realities of eternity require. Let this view, if only in the strong probabilities of the case, be preached with a sober judgment, and earnest heart, in every pulpit, as a great constraining motive, not forgetting in the mean time the gospel calls to faith and repentance, and we might, under the gracious influences of the spirit, see a more abundant harvest of souls gathered to Christ during the few years that may be left to us.

As before remarked, our opinions, or sober convictions of our minds will influence our feelings and action. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." I confess I feel more than ever the force of that appeal—"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for, and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." Only believe what the Bible plainly proves, that the

day of Christ, which, according to Paul, is to destroy the Papacy with the brightness of its coming, is identical with the day of God, in Peter, in which the earth, and the works that are therein shall be burned up—only admit, what the most eminent Biblical critics seriously believe, viz., that Popery has already run out its 1260 years of power, and is now in the process of being consumed—and where are we? On the eve, apparently, of some solemn, awakening providences, involving, not the fate of empires, or the political divisions of the earth only, but the final destinies of all the human race. We know not the day nor the hour, no not the angels in heaven; and we pity those who presume to fix dates; but we think the language of the prophet is now apposite, “It is near, it is near, it hasteth greatly.” This is no random assertion, or needless alarm. We have a measurement of the time if we will apply it. Popery is now an old affair. Strong circumstances prove that it has almost lived out its time. But it will not die gradually. It is not a system that ever will, or ever can be reformed by the truth. Its seat of power is now consuming away, but its spirit and ambition are the same as ever. Nothing will ever root it out of the world but the brightness of Christ’s coming. On this subject history and prophecy are alike plain.

Allow me to repeat this thought, wherein I may seem to be taking some things as granted, the proof of which will appear in subsequent lectures. Compare these things together—the age of Popery and the suddenness of its destruction in the “great and dreadful day of the Lord that shall burn as an oven”—and

where, I ask again, where are we? Nearing the termination of the Gospel dispensation, when the day of grace shall end forever to all mankind. Oh! it is no time to slumber and sleep. Let ministers and Christians awake lest that day come upon them "like a thief in the night." "Seal not the words of this prophecy, for the time is at hand." This is a command and commission to ministers at all times, and more especially now. Seal it not. That is conceal it not, but examine and publish it. Brethren, the time is short. Sinners are slumbering all around us. Wake them up with the fact that soon "the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." "Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God." Tell them it is not worth while to spend their tens of thousands on lordly mansions and costly cathedrals, in a world like this, which soon, with the works that are therein, shall be burned up. Better, far better to use their means in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and causing the poor to have the Gospel preached to them.

It is gratifying to think that the Gospel is being preached to the extent that it is among us. There is enough to bring every hearer and the whole community acquainted with the simple plan of salvation. Even our numerous Sabbath-school children have the story of the cross repeated to them over and over again. Yet with all this outward privilege, Alas! how barren are our churches — how contaminated with the worldly spirit — and how few are gathered into them from

the world. It would seem as if something were wanting to excite, and almost compel men to think soberly — to rouse all to action and decision in regard to their eternal interests. The precious truths of the Gospel seem to have become to many as a tale that hath been told; and the common motives arising from the uncertainty of life, and the imminency of death, pressed upon their notice from the pulpit, and by the providences of God, seem to have lost their power to move the heart. I have been wondering whether or not God is displeased with us for not noticing as we ought, in preaching, the ominous and solemn-toned Providences that are shaking the nations of Europe — displeased with us for not studying them in the light of prophecy, and seeing in them the signs of the coming of the Son of Man. What if, under the present aspects, this be not the very thing that is wanted to rouse men to thoughtfulness, and preparation for eternity. It may be the very motive the Spirit of God wants us to urge, in order to bless it to the edification of his church. What if there may be some miscalculation, the subject is never out of place. We are not backward to remind them of the day of judgment, but do we *know* when that will take place — are we *sure* it is away off in the far distant future?

If it might be permitted to advert to my motives in studying and publishing these views, I think it is with the hope and earnest desire that they may be instrumental in leading Christians to more seriousness, and in converting souls to Christ. I regard them as Bible views, and most precious and practical. The Gospel is being preached every Sabbath — God is not slack con-

cerning his promises—and the Holy Spirit is as ready as ever to bless Christian effort ; but He works, through the instrumentality of the truth and motives drawn from the word of God. Although not assigned to any public station in the church, I have a desire to be useful, if only in searching out and suggesting motives to those more actively engaged. It is not enough for us to say that the prospect of death is a sufficient incentive. The question is, not what is apparently the strongest motive to preach according to our estimate, but what motive God presents in his holy Word. It is remarkable that the day of death is but rarely set before us in Scripture as our great constraining motive. It is always the day of the Lord—the last day—the day when the Lord cometh. And what more animating to the wakeful Christian? It is enough to set his soul on fire, “reaching forth to the things before”—“looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ.” And while it is cheering to the lively believer, it is at the same time awfully awakening to the careless worldling. He will not like it, and may scarcely bear it; but we must “speak unto them and tell them, Thus saith the Lord, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.”

Do we feel a burden of grief for careless sinners perishing around us—a yearning of bowels for the salvation of those near and dear to us as relatives and friends? How would it enhance this feeling, were we to become persuaded, from the indications of providence and of the Word of God, that probably,

ere another half generation shall pass, the Day of Grace may close, and the whole mass of unbelievers perish from the earth? I will close these practical remarks at present with a stirring passage from Dr. Cumming, in reference to the idea just mentioned. "The instant that day dawns, the possibility of acceptance shall be gone. The instant that trumpet is heard, that instant the sound of Grace — so long set forth, and so long despised — will be silent. It is the arrest, the termination of the Day of Grace: it is the commencement of the day of fixture of character, of judgment, and irreversible decision. My dear friends," he goes on to say, "what an awful thing if that day should come in all its glory, and we should find ourselves excluded! What a terrible thing, if, when the trumpet shall sound, (and we know not when it shall sound), and the dead in every church-yard shall rise — if, from a grave where there are twain, one shall be taken and one left! And then, we that are alive, it is said, shall be caught up in the air. Oh! what a terrible separation will it be for one of a family, on hearing the royal sound, to assume mysterious wings, and soar, and come to Jesus, and the other to be left! And yet I am not describing a picture of fancy; I am stating what God himself has said. How dreadful the separation! We mourn the loss of those that fall asleep in Jesus; what a terrible shock it will be when we find those we loved upon earth severed from us for ever! Why is it, my dear friends, that we are not Christians? Why are we not the people of God? Why are we not trying to make others so? There is no reason outside you. There is only one — you *will*

not. Your inability is moral. There is not the least reason why every man in this assembly may not go home this night, and bow his heart before God, and be at peace with him through Jesus Christ. Recollect the serpent of brass. The dying Israelite had but to look ; the instant he looked he had physical strength. 'As Moses lifted up the serpent,' so was the Son of Man lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him, looketh to him, leans on him as a Saviour, may have instant spiritual life."

According to the course I pursued in the investigation of this subject, I should now proceed to another distinct topic, which may be entitled, the *Second Coming of Christ*. Before proceeding to this, I may observe here, that my object in these lectures is, to bring the question before your minds in a brief review of some of its leading features only, without troubling you with the almost endless debates that have been held on it. As before remarked, it has been with me a subject of serious study for years. I took it up by degrees, and at every step new light seemed to break in. I have read much on both sides, but my chief study has been what the Bible says on it. I have met with such learned criticisms, metaphorical reasonings, and philological discussions, as were almost sickening — that darken counsel by a multitude of words — and raise such a mist before the mind, that I could get no light till I betook me to the simple statements of Scripture, in "words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." These discourses are designed for those who love the Bible, and have

few, if any other sources to assist them in their inquiries. I am sorry to say that the controversy, in many cases, has not been conducted in such a spirit as I think calculated either to communicate or to receive light. I have been grieved to perceive apparent misunderstandings, and, it would seem, wilful misrepresentations, on both sides. I would have you observe that there have been two classes of writers in favour of pre-millennial views. The one regards the whole redeemed church of Christ as complete, at his coming, as I have considered it in my remarks on the 21st chapter of Revelations. The other class represents the state of society during the Millennium as a strange kind of mixture, consisting of risen saints in their resurrection bodies, reigning, with Christ, over some in the flesh, as they are at present, and who are to be born and converted in multitudes during that period. I cannot agree with those of the latter class, and will therefore confine my remarks to some principal features of the view entertained by those whom I consider most conformable to the Bible.

As further preparatory to entering on the subject of the second coming of Christ, in our next lecture I will here ask and remark on the question, When shall that coming be, and what will be the purpose of it? I suppose that nineteen out of twenty would answer, He will come at the end of time — at the last day, to judge the world. So would I once have answered. These events, the coming of Christ, and the end of the world, have been associated together in our minds from the teachings of earliest childhood. And I have no fault to find ; such teaching has no evil tendency. The answer does not interfere with a single article of our

faith and hope in Christ — of salvation, through faith in his blood, as applied to us by the Holy Spirit. In one sense the answer is correct. According to the pre-millennial view, his coming will be the decisive day for all mankind. It will be equivalent to a final judgment, although not quite in the sense generally understood. When the righteous dead are raised, and believers who are alive caught up, together with them, to meet the Lord in the air, and the wicked left in their graves, or on the surface of the earth, to be consumed with it, the separation will be as great and distinct as any judgment day can make it. The destinies of all nations will be involved in it. I believe there are popular misconceptions in regard to the day of judgment. Some seem to think of it as like a human assize — as a hearing of witnesses — a weighing of testimony — a discussion of facts — and sentence pronounced accordingly. I suppose there will be no such procedure. The moment a saint dies a blessing is pronounced on his soul, and he enters into the joy of his Lord. The instant a sinner dies, his sentence is pronounced, and punishment begins, and continues forever. At the day of Christ's coming, the righteous, in general, will hear the great benediction, "Come, ye blessed of my father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." But the formal judgment of the wicked will not take place till after their resurrection at the end of the thousand years; when, with natures unregenerated, and hearts filled with increased hatred and malignity, they make their last desperate attack on the "camp of the saints." These, I am inclined to believe, will constitute the armies of Gog and

Magog, "in the four corners of the earth, who went to compass the camp of the saints and the beloved city." If we may be allowed to reason, this opinion is as rational as to suppose that Satan would find an army like "the sand of the sea" in number, immediately after a thousand years of perfect holiness and peace. For them the great "White Throne" will be set. This is to be regarded as the judgment of the wicked alone. Then, "death and hell were cast into the lake of fire." And it is added, "Whosoever was not written in the Lamb's book of life was cast into the lake of fire." The following are Dr. Cumming's remarks on this passage: "Do you not notice that there is not one word here intimating the presence of one child of God as a subject of judgment, or the reward of a spiritual person? There is no expression, in the whole of this remarkable passage, which indicates that a justified and sanctified one was there. There is not the least hint, even the most meagre, of the reward of heaven, of admission into glory, or the reception of the inheritance. It speaks only of the depraved; it relates entirely to the lost; it describes only their doom; and therefore I believe that this is the last condemnation of the lost before an assembled universe, that it may be seen and felt through the whole intelligent creation of God, that nothing was left undone that omnipotence could do; and that all their guilt was spontaneous, and their responsibility was their own; and the conviction that it is so will rest forever upon themselves. I cannot, therefore, see that this judgment throne has anything to do with the people of God."

LECTURE IV.

SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.

“Unto them that look for Him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation.”

Heb. ix. 28.

THE subject of the present lecture is The Second Coming of Christ. I begin by quoting a number of passages relating immediately to that event, and showing how very frequently, in the New Testament, our faith is directed to it. They are the following: “As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.” “As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.” “For the powers of heaven shall be darkened, and then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory.” “This same Jesus which is taken from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” “So that ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” “Every man in his own order, Christ the first fruits, and afterwards they that are Christ’s at his coming.” “Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

“How ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living God, and wait for his Son from heaven.” “What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?” “We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep.” “I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” “We beseech you brethren by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him.” “When that Wicked shall be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume by the breath of his mouth, and destroy by the brightness of his coming.” “Looking for that blessed hope, and glorious appearing of the great God, even our Lord Jesus Christ.” “Be patient therefore brethren unto the coming of the Lord.” “Stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” “Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so come Lord Jesus.” Mat. xxiv. 27, 37. Luke xxi. 27. Acts i. 11. 1 Cor. i. 7, and xv. 23. Phil. iii. 20. 1 Thess. i. 10, and ii. 19, and iv. 15. 2 Thess. ii. 1, 8. Tit. ii. 13. James v. 7, 8. 2 Pet. i. 16. Rev. xxii. 20.

In regard to the fact that Christ will come again, there is no difference of opinion. All believe in his second coming; but here, as in a former case, the difference is, as to the time and manner, and purposes of his coming. The Bible plainly declares, that “unto them that look for him he shall appear the

second time, without sin unto salvation." I may here observe, as formerly, in reference to "*the day of the Lord*," that such an expression as "*the coming of the Lord*," must have some definite meaning, and that it always refers to the same coming. We look for only one more coming. He came once as a priest to offer a sacrifice for us ; and he will come again as a king to reign. "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many ; and unto them that look for him he will appear the second time, without sin," or a sin offering "unto salvation." The *first* was to open a way for their deliverance ; the *second* will be to complete their salvation. I cannot help thinking that there is a laxity of thought, and expression indulged in speaking of his coming — such as, his coming by his spirit in the gospel — to individuals at death — to the destruction of Jerusalem — to chastise guilty nations, etc. I have no objection to this popular mode of address in regard to his providential comings. He comes in his providence every day to bless us ; and "at sundry times and divers manners," to chastise a people for their sins. But it will not do in a sober interpretation of the Bible, to construe those predictions of the advent of Christ as purely spiritual. I would ask of those who think so — Is there a promise in the whole Bible that Christ will come personally at all ? If they insist upon these comings referred to being figurative only, or spiritual and not literal, then there is not a text in the whole word of God that will satisfy them that Christ will ever come personally. Christ has come spiritually already. The spiritual Christ was present when John said, "Come

Lord Jesus." The promise is, "Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of you." And again, "Lo! I am with you always even, to the end of the world," or, as it ought to be translated — the end of the age, or dispensation. Christ is spiritually present with his church now, and therefore the promises, and prayers, and expectations which relate to his coming, not yet realized, must refer to his personal, and not to the spiritual advent which is already felt and experienced by us.

If it were possible for us to lay aside all our early prejudices—to lose sight, for the time, of ecclesiastical authority — and come with the docility of little children to the teachings of Christ, it is probable we might see many things in a different light than we do. Aiming at this spirit, let us take up that farewell discourse to his disciples in the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters of John. The subject before us occupies a prominent place in that discourse. How frequently, in the immediate prospect of leaving them, does he insist on the pleasing theme of his second coming! "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will *come* again, and receive you to myself." "I will not leave you comfortless, I *will come* to you." "Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away and *come again to you.*" "Ye now, therefore, have sorrow, but I will *see you again.*" His obvious object in all this, was to soothe and comfort his disciples, at the time sorrowing at the thought of his leaving them. I do not think it in accordance with his general spirit of instructing his few immediate follow-

ers, at such a time to remind them of the alarming scenes of "the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men,"—a period at the distance 3,000 years—that scene we have been accustomed to associate in our minds with his second coming. But if we take it in the light in which Paul views it, when comforting and instructing the Thessalonians on this very subject, as "the coming of the Lord Jesus, and our gathering together unto him," then it seems in perfect keeping with the usual teachings of Christ.

This idea of his coming seems to be one made familiar to the minds of the disciples by his conversation with them, and that he alluded to it in that form of prayer he taught them, and also in the institution of the Supper. What kingdom is that for whose coming we are taught to pray? Is it his kingdom of Providence? That kingdom has always existed, and cannot be extended. Is it his kingdom of grace, in subduing his people to himself, in ruling and defending them, and in restraining and conquering all his and their enemies? That kingdom has long been established, and its operations ever going on. I believe it to be that kingdom which shall be set up "when the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." And I am taught this by that parable of our Lord concerning the nobleman who went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom; and who, when he returned, having received the kingdom, called his servants to an account. In that prayer we are also taught to say, "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven," that, is perfectly. In regard

to his secret will, that is always done. In regard to his revealed, or preceptive will, that will never be done perfectly on earth in this dispensation ; but in the " new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," it will be done on earth even as it is in heaven.

It is a well known fact that the early followers of Christ had imbibed the idea that his second coming in power would not be long postponed. To show this, I have only to refer to that question of the apostles after his resurrection, Acts i. 6: " Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel ?" Now that he was risen, they thought he would soon begin to reign. It is agreed by all that this idea was entertained by the primitive Christians. It is evident, that in view of some remarks of Paul in his first epistle to the Thessalonians, they were in some trouble and anxiety about it. But Paul, in a second epistle corrected their mistake. " Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in your minds, or be troubled ; neither by spirit nor by letter from us, as that the *day of Christ* is at hand," or immediately imminent ; " Let no man deceive you by any means ; for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first," or as it ought to be rendered, *the apostacy*, " and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition," etc. That apostate system, he goes on to show, and history teaches the same, would reach forward through many ages, and will not disappear

till “destroyed by the brightness of his coming”—that coming of which he had just spoken.

This supposition that his coming would not be long postponed, throws light on incidents I had not formerly perceived. For instance, in that interview of the Saviour with Mary at the sepulchre he used an expression of which I could not before perceive the relevancy. “Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to the Father.” This statement has puzzled critics, and various explanations have been given. The general opinion is, that he meant, Don’t waste time in an unnecessary embrace at present. I am not yet just about to ascend to my Father; you will have time enough afterwards to show your attachment. I received this explanation because I had no better to give, and because learned commentators said so. Still it appeared as somewhat incongruous and irrelevant. It did not give full satisfaction. But let it be supposed that Mary, in common with the early disciples, as has been shown, entertained the opinion that the promised second coming would speedily be realized. She was intimate with the beloved disciple John, who discoursed so much on that coming. Let it be supposed that she imagined this appearance of Jesus after the resurrection to be the accomplishment of that promise—that she embraced him—held him fast—or attached herself to him, as the word touch may be translated, determined that she would not part with him any more. Let this be admitted—and it is not asking too much—and we see the cogency of the words of Jesus. It was to correct her

mistake. It was as if he said — Do not thus mistake the meaning of my promise as your conduct would intimate. This is not the coming again of which I spake. I told you I must go to the Father first; but I am not yet ascended, therefore this is not my second advent.

Let us now briefly review these numerous passages before presented, which I did not quote for the purpose of analyzing them individually, but to show how very frequently in the New Testament our faith is directed to that event, and to try to find out the general import of them taken collectively. In regard to those gathered from the epistles, they show to what extent the apostles had imbibed the spirit of their Master, and imitated him in the way of instructing and comforting believers. In reminding them of the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ it was, invariably, in the way of consolation and encouragement, as you may perceive in looking over these passages. In regard to them, this was the sole use they made of this doctrine. They speak of it as the “*blessed hope*, and glorious appearing of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ;” and of “*our gathering together unto him* ;” but never in relation to the final condemnation of the wicked. The attitude of saints is described as *looking for* that blessed hope—*waiting* for it, and *rejoicing* in it. If the immediate object of that coming down were the “judgment and perdition of ungodly men,” it would be foreign to the object the apostles had in view to remind them of that.

But I would not appear guilty of special pleading.

I have admitted that that coming will be equivalent to a final judgment — that the separation will be as complete as any judgment day can make it, although not in the manner generally understood. If there be a distinction in regard to the time of the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked, as I hope to prove in the next lecture, there will be the same distinction in the formal judgment. Nor would we lose sight of the fact, that the ideas of God as a judge, and of a future and final judgment to all men, are presented in the Bible in cases more numerous than that of the second coming of Christ. But, it is worthy of remark, that these ideas are never associated with the peculiar phrase, the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in the stimulating and soothing language and occasions in which it is introduced. This coming has, evidently, some special aspect towards believers. “To them that *look for him* he shall appear the second time without sin, unto salvation.” Unbelievers do not look for him. It is alluded to, in the epistles, in such an informal manner as to show that it was a doctrine with which the early Christians were familiar, and that had been introduced into the oral instructions delivered among them, as the apostles had repeated to them the teachings of their Lord and Master. To find the true meaning of it, then, is to fall back on the teaching of Christ himself. In the whole of that farewell discourse to his disciples, already briefly considered, there is nothing that conveys the idea of the day of judgment, or that carries the mind forward beyond a thousand years of rest and tranquillity to the church. But there is another

long discourse of Christ to his disciples, which we have largely recorded, in which we have something still more definite on the point before us.

This discourse is found in Matthew xxiv., and is introduced in this wise. "And Jesus went out and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to show to him the buildings of the temple And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

Here are two distinct and pointed questions. Our Lord answers them at considerable length. If we are so assisted as to comprehend his language, it will or ought to be decisive on the subject. The difficulty of arriving at the simple meaning has been increased by the numerous lengthy and varied opinions that have been expressed on it. I have seen a brief and satisfactory comment on this chapter, of which I can here give you only a mere outline which may afford you a key to assist you in the study of it by yourselves at your leisure. Intelligent Bible readers, I hope, will be able to follow me.

The first question, "When shall these things be?" it is evident relates to the destruction of the temple. In answer "Jesus said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you." He then gives them some signs by which they might be directed, such as false Christs and false prophets — rumors of wars — famine

and pestilence — persecutions — the gospel preached throughout the Roman empire — the abomination of desolation, or the Roman armies and ensigns—and the miseries that would come on the land. These signs, the author of the comment shows at some length from Josephus and other historians, all literally came to pass before and at the destruction of Jerusalem. The enumeration of these signs brings us down to the 23d verse of the chapter ; and here ends the answer to the first question.

From the 23d to the 28th verse, inclusive, he warns them not to confound some of these signs, and the destruction of Jerusalem, with his second coming. He knew they would be apt to do this. And we know, from the epistle to the Thessalonians, as I have shown, that they did so, and actually thought that the day of Christ or his second advent was near or immediately imminent. He warns them beforehand in these words, “ Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo ! here is Christ, or there, believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders ; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. *Behold I have told you before.* Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold he is in the desert, go not forth ; behold he is in the secret chambers, believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.’” This is as if he had said, There can be no such mistake about my coming, when it takes place. It will not be something about which

men may dispute. It will be so palpable that every eye shall see me. It will be like the lightning's flash from the east to the west. As soon shall the eagle mistake something else for its prey, and pounce on a stone instead of a dead carcass, as the Christian take one for the Messiah who is not the Christ. Such seems to be the plain and simple meaning of this part of his discourse. What follows is his answer to the second question, and bears directly on the question before us.

The second question was —“What shall be the sign of thy coming, and the end of the world?” Our Lord's answer is, “Immediately after the tribulation of these days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be shaken : and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven : and then shall the tribes of the earth mourn when they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of the heaven, with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

I begin the examination of this answer by pointing out to you what is evidently a mistranslation in the form of the question. In doing this I would observe, first, that the figurative mode of interpreting Scripture was introduced by some of the early Christian writers after the “mystery of iniquity” had begun to work, which when adopted and continued in, resulted in the gross errors of the Papal system. It is a fact worthy of special notice, that the still more early

Fathers in the second and third centuries, Tatian, Justin Martyr, Ignatius, and Tertullian, wrote in favor of the literal mode of interpretation, and of the pre-millennial views. Again, the Reformers, in emerging from Popery, still retained some leaven of that system, and among others, that overweening deference to ancient *human* authority, on points not immediately connected with the Catholic and Protestant controversy. And further, the translators of the Bible, excellent men as they were, and ably as they performed their work, were not infallible ; and in some instances, the words they adopted are not in exact accordance with the original. I have thought that their bias in favor of long established theological opinions may have had some influence in their choice of expressions.

I will now point out to you the mistranslation in the form of the question. In the Greek language the word *cosmos* literally signifies the material world, and sometimes by metonymy, the people of the world. It is a word of very frequent occurrence in the New Testament. There is another Greek word that, in a few instances, is translated by the English word, world, but improperly, as I think, and that is *aion*. I refer you to one instance in which you cannot fail to perceive the impropriety. In Heb. ix. 26, the apostle presents the idea that it was unnecessary for Christ to offer himself often, as the Jewish high priest entered with the blood of atonement into the holy place every year — “ For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the *world* : but now once, in the end of the *world*, hath he appeared to put

away sin by the sacrifice of himself." You would naturally think that the word world, occurring here twice in one verse, was the same word in the original, but it is not so. In the first instance it is *cosmos*, and properly translated *world*. In the other, it is *aion*. It destroys the sense here to translate *aion* — world. It was not in the end of the world that Christ "appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," but in the end of the age, or *dispensation* of Jewish worship, and ought to have been so translated. Any one who can use a Greek lexicon may perceive that *aion* relates to time, and signifies an age or dispensation, a long period of time, and even eternity. The Greeks had no word to express eternity, and hence they use this by circumlocution. Thus in Heb. i, 8, "Thy throne, O! God, is forever and ever"—*eis ton aiona tou aionos* — to the ages of ages. Let me give you another plain instance. In Christ's explanation of the parable of the wheat and the tares, Mat. xiii. 38, "The field is the world." Here the word is *cosmos*, and is properly translated. Again, "The harvest is the end of the world." Here the word is *aion*, and ought to have been translated — The harvest is the end of the age, or dispensation. And again, "So shall it be at the end of this world," and ought to read, the end of this dispensation. You will perceive the use of these remarks when I tell you that in the question asked by the apostles, the word *aion* is used, and reads, "What shall be the sign of thy coming? and the end of the age or dispensation now commenced?"

Our Saviour's answer to this question I have al-

ready quoted in full. "Immediately after the tribulation of these days . . . shall appear the sign of the Son of man," and the accompanying events, as recorded and before quoted. The question now is, What *tribulation* is here meant? A candid mind, with simple faith in the Redeemer's words, and taking this discourse as a continuous whole, in answer to the question of his disciples, would naturally conclude that it was that tribulation of the Jewish nation spoken of in the 21st verse — "For there shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no nor ever shall be." In confirmation of this I look into the last chapter of Daniel, which is the closing scene of his vision, and carrying our mind forward even to the resurrection, and the second coming of Christ. "At that time shall Michael the great prince stand up"—Michael is one of the titles of Christ — "which standeth for the children of thy people"—the people of Daniel, the Jewish people—"and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time." How like the words of Christ — "and at *that time* thy people"—the Jewish people — "shall be *delivered*, every one that shall be found written in the book."

Here a question may arise in some minds. How can that deliverance of the Jewish people, "found written in the book," and that gathering of the elect from the four winds, in Christ's discourse — events, as are supposed, so far future — be reconciled with the announcement, "*immediately after* the tribulation of those days? The answer is, These tribulations

are not yet ended. The destruction of their city and temple, and the sufferings consequent thereon, are called only “the *beginning of sorrows*.” Those who are not in some degree acquainted with the sufferings of the Jews at that period, when upwards of 1,100,000 perished by war, famine, and intestine seditions, can scarcely realize the truth and force of the Saviour’s words — “There shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world.” Nor can those who have read their history in their dispersions — the inhuman persecutions, horrid massacres, and cruel exactions that have been practised on them in every nation of Europe, almost to the present time — for a moment doubt that these tribulations are still continued. As I read the inspired record on this subject, together with other histories, I conceive that these tribulations which began with the destruction of Jerusalem, reach forward to the sign of the coming of the Son of Man, and I am confirmed in this by the parallel passage in Luke xxi. 24, taken in connection with the one before us. “There shall be great distress in the land, and wrath on this people.” Here is the beginning of the tribulation — “They shall fall by the edge of the sword.” Here is the tribulation continued — “and shall be led captive to all nations.” Here is the tribulation and punishment continued — “and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles.” Here is the tribulation still continued — “until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” This passage will be more fully considered in a future lecture.

As I said before, all that I attempt in these lec-

tures is a mere outline — merely to throw out some thoughts that may perhaps assist you in your private reading and study of the Bible on this interesting theme. I am perfectly aware that the great majority — perhaps nine-tenths of the Christian community — on reading the passage under consideration, would have their minds carried away forward to a period beyond the Millennium — to a general and simultaneous rising of the righteous and the wicked at the end of time. Without entering into controversy with them here, I would merely throw out some suggestions, or questions, which you may answer for yourselves, taking the Bible, and the Bible alone, to guide you in your private judgments. This passage you hold to be a distinct announcement of the second coming of the Son of Man. Then I ask, Is it not in immediate connection with the termination of the tribulations of the Jews? You hold that this advent is away at a period you know not how long after the thousand years of the Millennium. Then I ask, Is there no hope for the Jews all that time? Are all those remarkable promises and predictions relating to the restoration of that peculiar people to be thrown to the winds? Will their tribulations reach throughout the thousand years? You hold that this passage depicts the scenes of the last judgment of the righteous and wicked at the end of time. But we read here only of the gathering together of the elect. The whole passage is an answer to the question, “What shall be the sign of thy coming, and the end of the dispensation?” If he understood this as meaning the end of all time, would he not have given them a glimpse of

the thousand years of peace and prosperity for the church? There is not a word of that, but the contrary. See again Luke xxi. 25, "Upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring"—that is, popular commotions—"men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." And what then? A Millennium? No, not a syllable about that, but, "then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

I have not time nor space to say all I have to say on this subject. I conclude at present with a brief notice of another sign or signal he gave to his disciples in answer to their questions. And here let me observe, that what he says to them he says to all, "*Watch*" the signs. In immediate succession to what I have already quoted, he says, "Now learn a parable of the fig tree: when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh. So likewise when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things shall be fulfilled." Now, I believe this parable of the fig tree had a special reference to the subject on which he was speaking, and to the Jewish nation. You remember the incident of the fig tree whereon he found no fruit, on which he pronounced a curse, and it withered away. Commentators say that that was an emblematical action—that the fig tree represented the Jewish nation, then about to wither under the curse of God. I have no

doubt that the fig tree in this place has a similar reference. The fig tree is the emblem of that nation, even as the rose is the emblem of England, and the thistle of Scotland. There are blessed promises yet in reserve for the Jews. "Hath God cast away his people," says Paul, Rom. xi. 1-23-25, "God forbid. If they abide not in unbelief they shall be grafted in again. I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, that blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in . . . and so all Israel shall be saved." Now before this takes place the fig tree shall begin to bud and put forth leaves. This I believe is the fact at the present day. The Jews, like the Christians, have been slumbering in apathy for ages in regard to this glorious event. The intelligent among them never gave up the hope of a restoration; but it is only of late that they have been waking up to it. I could produce many facts to prove this, but can barely mention a few. In all directions the Jews are awakening to a sense of nationality. They begin to stand out as they never did before. They are organizing plans for repossessing Palestine. The Rothschilds hold a mortgage on that land. Many have gone there as agriculturists, and send back glowing reports of the good land. In this country and in England millions of dollars have been secured for carrying out their plans, and for rebuilding the temple. It is only within thirty years they have been permitted to live within the walls of their city; and now there are more Jews in Jerusalem than there have been during the last seventeen centuries. They

are less immersed in Rabbinism than ever. More Jews have been converted during the last eighteen years than during the previous eighteen centuries.

Brethren, these are signs we ought to study if we would be prepared to see the sign of the Son of Man ; for mark his words —“ This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled.” This in times past was a dark saying to me, and has confused the minds of thousands. It seems utterly absurd to apply the whole of this prophecy we have been considering to the destruction of Jerusalem, and to restrict *this* generation to the generation alive when Christ spake these words. I have a very simple verbal criticism to make, which, I think, gives the true meaning. The word here translated *this*, is a pronoun used emphatically to refer to the thing last spoken of, and may as often be rendered by the word *that* as the word *this*. The English words *the same*, convey the precise meaning. Take an instance or two : “ In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. *The same* was in the beginning with God.” The word here translated *the same*, is the very word which occurs in the verse before us. Again, “ In *that* night there shall be two men in one bed, the one shall be taken and the other left.” Here the pronoun *that*, in the original, is precisely the same as the one in the verse under consideration. Now had it occurred to the translators to use the word *that* instead of *this*, the confusion would have been avoided, and our minds long ago have become familiar with the simple and significant application of the parable of the fig tree. “ Verily I say

unto you *that generation*”—the generation that witnesses the budding of the fig tree — the generation that sees those signs of reviving national life among the Jews now apparent, “*that generation shall not pass till all be fulfilled.*”

Brethren, I believe *we* are that generation. Those facts just noticed — the aspects of Divine Providence in the east—and the apparent openings for the return of the Jews to Palestine, indicate to us the budding of the fig tree. When, as a nation, they literally repossess their own land, and are there converted, which, without any doubt will be the case, then their tribulations will be ended. *Immediately* after look for the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. I leave it to your own minds to weigh these matters, and to make the application.

In order to finish this branch of our general subject this evening, indulge me a few moments while I add briefly the Scriptural evidence in favor of a personal coming and reign on earth. I used to reason with myself and others—What would be the use of his personal appearance on earth again? He can effect all we understand by the Millennium through the ministration of his Spirit, and complete the whole economy of redemption without leaving his throne in heaven, until at the end of time he comes personally to judge the world. But it appears to me now that as this whole subject is one of pure revelation, no speculations of human reasoning can be safely entertained. If the idea of a personal coming previously be plainly expressed in the words of inspiration, we must believe it just because the Bible says it.

Here again I take up the Greek lexicon to see what is the meaning and sense of the word so often translated by the English word, coming. I find the word, *Erchomai*, a Greek verb, signifying, to come. When the action of the agent is expressed, the verb is used, as in these examples: "If I go away, I will come again." "Occupy till I come." "Behold I come quickly." Again I find the word *Parousia*, a Greek noun, signifying a presence, an arrival, a coming; and in all cases implies, or conveys the idea of the personal presence of the individual spoken of. Take the following examples, and for the sake of impression I will insert the Greek noun within brackets where it occurs: Paul, in writing of some of his opposers, has this remark, "His letters, say they, are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence [Parousia] is weak." Again, "That your rejoicing in Christ may be more abundant by my coming." [Parousia.] "God comforted us by the coming [Parousia] of Titus;" "and not by his coming only." [Parousia.] "I am glad of the coming [Parousia] of Stephanus." In these cases it plainly signifies the personal presence of the person spoken of.

Now take some examples in reference to Christ. "What shall be the sign of thy coming?" [Parousia.] "So shall the coming [Parousia] of the Son of Man be." "They that are Christ's at his coming." [Parousia.] "Whom he shall destroy by the brightness of his coming." [Parousia.] "That we may have confidence; and not be ashamed before him at his coming." [Parousia.] "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the pres-

ence of the Lord at his coming." [Parousia.] And again, "To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming [Parousia] of our Lord Jesus Christ, *with all his saints.*" How similar is this to the prophecy in Zechariah, "The Lord my God shall come and *all the saints with thee.*"

These quotations, together with the definitions of lexicographers, need no farther remark of ours. In connection with our former reasoning on the subject, they furnish a strong additional argument. The argument on the whole is briefly this. Christ teaches that his coming will immediately succeed the termination of the tribulations of the Jewish nation. Paul teaches that that coming will be the agency in the destruction of the "man of sin." Providences indicate that the restoration of the Jews, and the fall of Popery, are events at no great distance ; therefore we conclude that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

LECTURE V.

THE FIRST RESURRECTION.

And the dead in Christ shall rise first.—1 Thess. iv. 16.

THE subject before us this evening is the *First Resurrection*. The description of the advent, I was commenting on last sabbath evening, closes with these words —“And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his *elect* from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” This naturally introduces us to the subject of this evening, and is quite parallel to the text we have chosen. “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God : and *the dead in Christ shall rise first.*”

The subject of the *first resurrection* is one that has given rise to a controversy ; and so much has been written on both sides, that it will be no easy task to present the question, in brief review, so as to enable you to understand the argument. The passage that has given rise to so much dispute, is found in the twentieth chapter of Revelations. As the result of the binding of Satan, at the fourth verse it reads thus : “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them, and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus;

and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands ; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection : on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scripture, might have hope." As far as it can be ascertained, we ought to be anxious to know the mind of the Spirit, and not be discouraged in searching, although different opinions exist on such a subject as this. The reasonable inquiry even here is — What idea does the spirit of inspiration design to convey to us by this language ?

One class of writers say, and the great majority of Christians seem to believe, that the millennial period will be distinguished by generations of men *resembling* the martyrs of former ages, who suffered death for the witness of Jesus — that the *first resurrection* spoken of in the passage read, is not a resurrection of the bodies ; but of the principles, doctrines, spiritual character, and life of Christian martyrs — that it is a resurrection of their spirit, that is, fearlessness of death — fixed constancy, and victory over persecution. In support of this view they adduce the vision of the dry bones, in Ezekiel xxxvii, 11. "Then said he unto me, son of man, these bones are the whole house

of Israel : behold they say, our bones are dried, and our hope is lost ; we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy and say unto them, thus saith the Lord God ; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you again into the land of Israel." Hence they allege, that, as this was a symbolical resuscitation — an emblem of the resurrection of the nation of Israel, so this, in Revelation, is a symbol of the resuscitation or reproduction of the spirit and life of early martyrs, in the generations of men during the Millennium. The parable of the prodigal son is also adduced as a parallel case, where it is said, when he was restored to his father, " This my son was dead, and is *alive again*" — that is, arisen from the dead. Now, as a general reply to all this, I observe that there are some strong objections to receiving this view of the passage. What looks like illustration here, is not so. When we take into view the resurrections here spoken of, we must likewise take into view the deaths corresponding to them, that is, judge of the nature of the resurrections, by the nature of the deaths. That of the Jews was *national* — their resurrection, therefore, must be national too. The death of the prodigal was *spiritual*, his resurrection must necessarily be spiritual too. But the death of the martyrs here was *individual* and *literal* — they were "*beheaded* for the testimony of Jesus." Of Babylon it is said, " In her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were *slain* in the earth." Hence, these very illustrations supposed as proof of their view, are strongly in favor of the opposite view. As national

death in the case of the Jews, implied that their resurrection would be national — as a spiritual death, in the case of the prodigal, implied that his resurrection would be spiritual — so the literal death in the case of the martyrs, implies that their resurrection must be literal and personal too.

And there is yet another difficulty lying against the popular view. It supposes this resurrection in the passage before us, means the resurrection of the spirit of martyrs, that is fearlessness, and fixed constancy in death. This seems unnatural, when we take into view the universal peace and holiness during the Millennium. How shall there be *martyrs* when there shall be no *murderers*? How shall they manifest that *spirit*, when there shall be nothing to try it? On the whole we are forced to conclude, that this passage teaches the literal resurrection from the dead, of those among others that died and sealed their testimony with their blood.

But I have not yet done with the subject. I have consulted an author who enters very largely into this question, and produces *three* presumptions and *nine* arguments against a literal interpretation of this passage. He carries out his argumentation in labored, and I may add, in confused expression, over forty closely printed pages. Some of them I regard as not worthy of notice here. Others of them may be refuted in almost as few words as it required to state them. As a general remark here, I may say, that a cause that requires such a long and labored defence, is, of itself, a presumption against it. A clear statement of a lucid argument does not need a very length-

ened illustration. Some of his arguments that may appear a little more specious, I may notice at some more length. I am under the impression, that a candid mind, with a simple faith in the words of inspiration just as they read, might be disposed, on looking over the discussion referred to, to ask with surprise, Are these all the 'arguments that can be advanced against the literal, and in favor of the figurative interpretation in this place?

One argument or presumption adduced against the literal interpretation of the resurrection here is—"If mentioned only in one passage, we might expect a clear, and unambiguous revelation of it would be made." To this I reply,—that to a mind unbiassed by a theory, the literal meaning is far more obvious and unambiguous than the figurative one.

Another argument is, "That if it be a literal resurrection of immortal and glorified bodies, we need not the assurance, that on 'such the second death hath no power.'" If this be an objection, it lies against the figurative as much as the literal interpretation. The second death shall have no power over persons possessing the principles, doctrines, spiritual character and life of Christian martyrs.

Again, it is alleged that, "there are but two alternatives in this prophecy, either to have 'part in the first resurrection,' or, to be under the power of the second death. What then is to become of those who live and die during the thousand years?" To this I answer. According as we view that period, none but risen saints, and changed believers, will exist on earth during that dispensation.

Another allegation against the literal interpretation here is, "That to say the risen and glorified church is to live and reign with Christ for a thousand years, is totally unlike the language of Scripture in every other place." In opposition to this, I affirm, it is very like Scripture language in other places. "It is a faithful saying, for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." "To him that overcometh I will grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I have overcome and am set down with the Father on his throne."

Again this author says, "if taken literally then, 'the rest of the dead, who lived not again until the thousand years are finished,' must be expected to live again, in the same bodily sense, when 'the thousand years are finished;' but we read of no bodily resurrection at the expiration of this period." To this I say, there is an express assertion of the fact—"The rest of the dead lived not again *until* the thousand years were finished;" of course they lived then, in the same sense as the others.

Such are some of the arguments alleged against the literal interpretation in this place. Others of them will be noticed further as I proceed, endeavoring, in my own way, to take a plain and common sense view of the passage. Here, I may repeat a rule of interpretation before laid down, viz., 'That the literal meaning of Scripture, where it does not involve absurdity or contradiction, is the true meaning. The passage begins thus :—

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them,

and judgment was given unto them.” Here a plain reader may observe that there is no nominative to the verb, “*they sat.*” It would be an awkward construction, to make the persons mentioned in the next clause the nominative, seeing there is a full point between them. We are left to conjecture as to the persons who sat on the thrones. Comparing Scripture with Scripture, I am reminded here of a saying of the Saviour to his twelve Apostles: “Then answered Peter, and said unto Him, Behold we have forsaken all and followed thee, what shall we have, therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily, I say unto you, That ye who have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” Here I want you to take particular notice, that in the Greek text just quoted, the point is after “followed me,” and the words, “*in the regeneration,*” are joined to what follows. It reads thus: “Ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory,” etc. “In the regeneration” refers to an after state. It does not seem to refer to that state understood as the heavenly, eternal state, when there is neither “Greek nor Jew, circumcision or uncircumcision, but Christ is all in all.” It must mean the regeneration of the earth, the “new heavens, and a new earth,” as before explained. I am disposed to take this as the simple meaning of this part of the apocalyptic vision. And how delightful to the Christian’s heart, to think of the Apostles thus distinguished in that dispensation as in this!

The passage proceeds — “And judgment was given unto them.” I understand this — judgment was committed to them, or some authority vested in them in that coming dispensation, as there is in the present. The word “judgment” in the original here, signifies — the *power of judgment*, authority to judge ; and to give, means to *give up*, to *present*, to *commit to*, etc. How this authority will be exercised I know not. I take this to be a similar form of expression to that in another place, in John’s writings. “The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son,” or judgment was given to the Son. Take it thus, and we have a simple solution of the passage.

Here let me notice another of the arguments before referred to, against the literal interpretation, which the author says, “is sufficient of itself to settle the meaning of the vision.” In a labored discussion he tries to connect this part of Revelation with a passage in the sixth chapter, where the saints or martyrs are represented as crying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” Here, in an explanation, I cannot comprehend ; he supposes the same persons obtaining what they asked, viz., judgment against their enemies. He seems to see their former prayer answered in the destruction of Babylon. Turning the argument against the literal interpretation, he has these words, and I quote them as a curiosity : “If judgment is to be given unto the martyrs *personally* at the Millennium, their blood must also be *personally avenged* on them that dwell on the earth. If the

martyrs are to rise bodily from their graves, in order that judgment may be personally given to them, their bloody persecutors, every one of them, must be raised from their graves, to have vengeance rendered to them for the blood of those dear saints which they have shed. If *Paul*, for example, was seen in this millennial vision, having judgment given unto him, in his individual person, why is not *Nero* here also, to have apostolic blood avenged on him? If *Ignatius*, the martyr, why not also *Trajan*, the tyrant? If *Justin* and *Polycarp*, and the blessed martyrs of *Lyons* and *Vienne*, why is not the mild and lauded *Marcus Antoninus* confronted with them in this judicial blood-avenging resurrection?" I quote this to give you a curious specimen of the mode of argument on the other side; and I am willing to leave it with you to decide between this augmentation and the plain and natural view of the passage I submitted to you before, where it is supposed that judgment was committed to them, or some peculiar authority vested in those that sat upon the thrones.

Next, in the language of the vision, is the following—"And I saw the souls of those that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark in their foreheads, nor in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ, a thousand years." In the array of arguments, above mentioned, it is alleged, that "If a resurrection of the righteous in general, the description is very unlike the thing described;" and again, "It is a fatal objection to the literal sense

of the prophecy, as announcing the bodily resurrection of all the dead, and the change of all the living saints, that this is only a *martyr scene*." In opposition to all this I think I can see, in this passage, in prophetic style, a very general and varied description of righteous character, and may include all genuine saints from the commencement of the Christian dispensation. In the first class may we not discern the army of martyrs and confessors who suffered during the government of pagan Rome? Beheading being the Roman mode of execution, it may denote the Roman authority under which they suffered. In the next class we see the character of those who lived in opposition to all the wide spread corruptions that have deformed the visible church ever since papal Rome obtained ascendancy in the world. They "worshipped *not* the beast, neither his image." By the image of the beast, we understand the general counsels of the Romish church, which, by their decisions concerning doctrines and worship, *represented* and sustained the church of Rome. They are the image of the beast. I am apprehensive that this slavish deference to antiquity, or to ancient ecclesiastical decisions, is not wholly confined to that communion — that there are those in Protestant communions, who pay more regard to the *church*, and the majority in the church, than to the plain simple teachings of Christ in the Bible; and trust more to outward forms and sacraments, than in his atoning blood alone, for salvation. This mark of the beast — this worshipping of his image — may be found in churches having no outward connection with Rome. Even in those appar-

ently the furthest removed from the gross worship of popery, there is much of mere formalism in their feelings and worship. Infidelity, I believe, lies at the root of the whole popish system : and hence, those who openly set aside the authority of the Bible, or, who, professing to receive it, live in practical unbelief, seem to have the mark of the beast “in their *foreheads*.” Covetousness, or the love of filthy lucre, together with the use of unhallowed means for grasping it, are distinctive features of the papal system. The priesthood, who are most active in promoting it, having a profession of religion on their lips, secretly retain their ungodly gains and extortions in their hands. Thus, covetousness is a mark of the beast. Let all then, even in Protestant communities, who are following as their chief good the unlawful, or too eager pursuit of worldly wealth or honor, beware lest they have this mark of the beast “in their *hands*.” Alas ! for the world, there is too much of the papacy retained or creeping in among us all. The formal worship, the temporizing spirit, the worldly conformity of many churches, savor too much of these marks. It is those only who have “escaped the corruptions of the world through lust”—who have maintained the pure doctrines, and simple worship of the gospel, like the Waldensian witnesses in the darkest ages of popery ; and like the primitive churches under pagan oppression, that are to rise and reign with Christ, and have a part in the first resurrection.

Next in order in the language of the vision, is the remarkable phrase that has given rise to all this controversy — “*This is the first resurrection.*” Is it *literal*

or *figurative* in its signification? It is true there is a figurative or spiritual resurrection — a rising with Christ to newness of life: but this resurrection has been taking place ever since the beginning, as sinners are being converted to God. Is it a resurrection of the principles and life of the martyrs? This spirit has always, in more or less degree, existed in the church. In every age there have been witnesses for the truth; and if signs do not deceive us there will be need for the spirit of martyrs, before the Millennium comes. In short, I consider it a very forced construction, to give a figurative sense to these words — “This is the first resurrection.” Take them literally and there is a beautiful simplicity in them as words of explanation. It greatly assists our conceptions of symbolical language to have such words of explanation, and they are of frequent occurrence. Thus in the vision of the seven golden candlesticks — “The seven candlesticks *are* seven churches.” So in our Saviour’s explanation of one of his parables — “The harvest *is* the end of the age — the reapers *are* the angels.” So in the explanation of one of Daniel’s visions, “These great beasts which are four, *are* four kings,” and “the ten horns *are* ten kings.” Just so in the case before us. This *living* and reigning with Christ a thousand years, *is* the first resurrection. How like this is the style of the Apostle John in other cases! For instance, when he introduces the Saviour speaking in these words, “He that believeth on me out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters.” John in his beautifully simple style of writing, adds an explanation, “Thus spake he of the Spirit which

they that believe on him should receive." Again, the Saviour says — "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." John adds, in explanation — "This he said, signifying what death he should die." Hence I cannot avoid the conclusion that these words — This is the first resurrection — is a literal explanation of what went before.

The writer, before mentioned, of the three presumptions and nine arguments against this doctrine, says with strange presumption, that it is announced in only one passage. I will now show you that the priority of the resurrection of the righteous is no new doctrine introduced by the spirit of inspiration only at the close of the canon of Scripture. We meet with it in a variety of instances in the New Testament, to which I now refer you. In 1 Thess. chap. iv., we have these words: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall *rise first*. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." If it be said that this has reference only to the order of rising, and not to any long period between — that the general resurrection of all men will be simultaneous, only the righteous will have the precedence in the order of rising, I answer, that this were a matter of such small moment as not to be worthy of specific mention. Besides, if this were all, it would be no very special comfort to know it. But if told, that while the wicked remained in the state of the dead till the end of time, it would be their glorious privilege to rise and reign with Christ during a long period previously, it would be well

worthy of mention as a matter of great consolation. Those in the other view have no word of Scripture to prove it—to prove a simultaneous rising. We have the express statement that “the rest of the dead lived not *till* the thousand years were finished.”

Again, in Phil. iii. 11, Paul speaking of his labors and losses for the sake of the gospel, says : “If by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead.” If he had reference to a simultaneous rising of the wicked and the righteous, there would be no force or meaning in the expression. What peculiar attainment would it be for him if all should attain it, the wicked as well as the righteous? He, therefore, evidently had before his mind the first resurrection; and the peculiar phraseology he employs on the occasion proves it to be so. Any Greek scholar may perceive that the translation here is defective. It ought to be rendered—“If by any means I might attain the resurrection *from among* the dead”—that resurrection of which it is said, “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.”

Again in 1 Cor. xv. ; all admit that this describes the resurrection of the righteous only. There is no allusion to the case of the opposite character. It is addressed to believers by way of consolation, and spoken in the first person. Reasoning from the resurrection of Christ, the apostle goes on to say : “But every man in his own order; Christ the first fruits; and afterwards they that are Christ’s *at his coming*.” “As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” “So when this corruptible, shall have put on incorruption,

and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory." *Then* shall be brought to pass. The question is, *When?* To find this, we turn to the place where it is written in Isaiah, chap. xxv., which is a millennial song. After describing the events that are to precede the advent of Christ, the prophet goes on to say, "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously!" Then follows the song for the Millennium, giving the sentiments that will be felt and expressed by the rising saints: "He will *swallow up death in victory*; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth; for the Lord hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo! this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." Just the language, put in the mouth, as it were, of rising saints and waiting believers. Connect now the two passages, in Isaiah and Paul: *Then*, when the Lord shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem—*then* when Christ shall come to introduce the Millennium—*then* shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory."

We have further evidence in favor of this view in the teachings of Christ himself, Luke xiv. 13, "When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the blind, the lame, and thou shalt be blessed: for they

cannot recompense thee : for thou shalt be recompensed at the *resurrection of the just.*” If it were a general and simultaneous rising, why this specification — the resurrection of *the just* ? Why not the resurrection simply, or the resurrection of the dead ? But the Saviour is still more clear in another passage in his reply to the Sadducees, Luke xx. 34, “ The children of this world ” — here is the word *aion* again, signifying age or dispensation : “ The children of this dispensation marry and are given in marriage ; but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that dispensation, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage ; neither can they die any more ; for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.” This is a very remarkable passage, and clear, in our view of the subject. Here we have the peculiar phraseology, as before mentioned. In the Greek there is the repetition of the article, and reads thus, “ *the* resurrection, *the one from among* the dead.” Those who attain this resurrection are, “ the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.” Take this in the sense of a general resurrection, and it leads to an absurdity. In this view, all are the children of God, for all are the children of the resurrection. Here let me note that this passage is strongly laid hold of by Universalists to prove that all are the children of God, and shall eventually be saved. But the privilege is restricted to those who shall be accounted *worthy* of that age, and the resurrection from among the dead. “ Neither can they die any more,” says the Saviour. “ On them the second death hath no power,” says the apostle John.

Thus have I briefly gone over, in calm and candid inquiry, this remarkable passage; and brought together the infallible testimonies of Christ and two of his apostles on this subject. Have I succeeded in eliciting their testimony? That is the question. I have compared Scripture with Scripture, not with the skill of a learned critic, but I trust with an honest heart. The examination of this whole subject was commenced with a desire to obtain more full satisfaction to my own mind, then beginning to receive the pre-millennial views. The more I have examined, the more am I confirmed in the opinion that these are, in their general features, conformable to Scripture. I ask none to adopt my opinions, though they may seem plausible, but to study for themselves. Let them use what helps they can find — have their minds disabused of prejudice — and above all, with uplifted hearts of desire, saying: “Open thou mine eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of thy law.”

Bear with me a few moments more at present, in a brief application of the subject. The idea of a general resurrection is more or less familiar to all who have enjoyed gospel teaching; but how many thousands have never once thought of it in the light here presented. Viewed in its circumstances and results, as a scene in which each of us must appear, even although at the distance of more than a thousand years, it is an awfully solemn and impressive subject. But if it is near — so near that millions now alive may survive to perceive with bodily senses, “The Lord himself shall descend with a shout, with the voice of

the archangel, and with the trump of God" — the dead in Christ rising first, and living saints caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air — Oh! how much more impressive ought to be the thought?

The thought of death, which according to common consent, every one of us must inevitably encounter, with all its solemn and everlasting results, is impressive. No one can fully convince himself that it is at a distance. It may be a matter of experience of any one of us within a year, a month, or even a day; yet how little it is thought of. Death, as a general thing, is not sudden. It has its premonitions of sickness, wasting, and decay. This is a merciful arrangement; yet how much this mercy is abused. In health we wait for the season of declining strength. We flatter ourselves that we shall yet live many years; and that in the closing scene we shall have an opportunity of making our peace with God, and preparing for eternity. But let the idea get hold of the mind — the idea which is most apparently confirmed both by revelation, and the aspects of Divine Providence, that the scenes of the resurrection may, ere a few years, burst upon our view in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, affording not even an instant of time for preparation, and how much more influential might it prove, even on minds now wholly carried away with the things of time and sense? I am convinced, that were this view, if only in the strong probabilities of the case, preached, as an awakening motive, with a sober mind and earnest heart, not forgetting, in the mean time, the Gospel calls to faith and repentance, we might, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, see

a greater gathering of souls to Christ than we have ever yet seen.

I will close this lecture and subject this evening with an impressive extract from Dr. Cumming :—

“ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up.” And when Christ comes, how startling shall be the hour of the advent ! The dead that fell asleep in Jesus, and have slept many thousand years, shall hear, when he comes, the approach of his footfall, and recognize the sound of his voice, and shall rise and meet him in the air. The living that are in Christ shall hear his approach too, and recognize the tones of his voice, and shall rise and meet him, and the risen and quickened dead in the air, and reign with him a thousand years. Abraham, and Noah and Job, shall hear his voice in their silent sepulchres, and join him in the air. Paul, and Peter, and John, and Luther, and Wilberforce, and Simeon of Cambridge, and Venn, and Williams, and Chalmers, shall obey his summons from their sequestered and separate tombs, and gather around their glorious Lord. One grave shall cleave in twain, and its buried tenantry shall rise and meet the Lord, and the other grave, that looks equally green, beside it, shall fail to be pierced by that sound, or its dead dust to be moved. The cemeteries of stone, and the monuments of bronze shall rend, and the dead saints that are there shall come forth—its sleeping dust shall be quickened in every sepulchre ; and the stones of

cathedrals, and the vaults of churches, and the green turf, and the marble mausoleum shall alike explode, and pour forth into the air their troops of awakened dead. Nor less startling will be the scenes that occur among the living. Some families shall be met together, speaking of the things of this world — in an instant, and without warning, one shall hear a sound significant to his heart of glory, and rise as upon the lightning's wing, and with its splendor, and leave, without a farewell, the rest that know not Christ and remain astonished behind. Oh ! great day of separation of families — of dislocation of households — of severance of the dead — of removal of the living — of astonishment to the world — of glory to the Lord Jesus — of happiness to the saints ! But you ask, what shall become of those that are left behind ? The earth having given up the silent dust of the saints that sleep beneath it — and every living saint that lives upon the earth having heard his voice, and responded to its call — then the fire that is treasured up, as I explained to you, in the very centre of the earth, shall burst forth at ten thousand crevices — ‘ the elements shall melt as with fervent heat,’ the solid rocks shall blaze as if they were wax, and the rivers as if they were oil, and the weary old earth, having undergone the ordeal of the last fire, shall regain its pristine purity, and become fit for the immediate presence of the descending Saviour and his risen saints. The earth shall be made new — its soil restored — paradise regained. The deep-toned *miserere* of humanity that has risen for six thousand years, shall be lost in the everlasting jubilee. There will be no tears

— no sighs — no crying — no storms shall disturb its calm — there will be no decay in its verdure — no serpent's trail amid its flowers — but happiness and love, and joy, and peace, for a thousand years, in the presence of Christ and his saints."

LECTURE VI.

THE RESTORATION OF THE JEWS AND EXPIRATION OF THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES.

Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

LUKE xxi. 24.

INTIMATELY connected with the general subject we have been discussing, constituting a prominent feature of it, and a grand event of the future, there remains for our consideration, *the restoration of the Jews*. Here, as often before, in the brief statement to which I am confined, I am at some loss where to begin, and how condense the subject intelligibly, so as to interest you, and, it may be, assist you in a further study of it at your leisure. There is much in these discussions new to me, and I sometimes feel ashamed, that, after having been so long a professed student of the Bible, and teacher of the word, these most interesting topics of revelation have received so little of my attention.

As preliminary to the Jewish question, it may be useful to make a few further remarks on the literal and figurative modes of interpreting Scripture. The question here is, are the prophecies of the Old Testament, a great part of the language of which seems to relate to God's ancient people the Jews, to be taken literally, and grammatically ; or, are we to under-

stand them figuratively, as unfolding the purposes of God toward the Christian church? Are the promised blessings in these glowing predictions, to be transferred wholly, or chiefly to those gathered out of all nations, as a people for Christ, while the poor Jews, as a distinct people, are left without any peculiar share in them? I think not.

As a general remark here, it may be observed, that an author desirous of instructing his readers would naturally use words in the sense usually attached to them by the people who spoke the language in which he wrote, and for whose benefit they were immediately written. What ideas could the Jews draw from these prophecies, if all were to be understood figuratively? What knowledge had they of Christianity? Suppose, for example, Israel to signify the Christian church; and by some stretch of the imagination, if you please, allow that Judah and Ephraim may imply the sects into which it has been unhappily divided; and what would a Jew — yea, what can a Christian, taking it figuratively, learn from such a prophecy as that contained in Isaiah, xi. 10 — 16? To save time, I read only parts of it, you may read the whole at your leisure. “In that day there shall be a root of Jesse which shall stand for an ensign of the people; and to it shall the Gentiles seek. . . and it shall come to pass . . . that the Lord shall set his hand again the *second time*, to recover the remnant of his people from Assyria, and from Egypt and from Pathos. . . . The envy of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex

Ephraim, etc.” Allowing every word of this remarkable prophecy to retain its proper and natural meaning it is clear and intelligible, and holds out a glorious hope for the Jews in time to come. But take it in an allegorical sense, and it is utterly impossible to explain many of the terms it contains. It is true, the Jews were a typical people ; and their ancient history was written for the use of the church, and of the world in all ages, as an illustration of the unchangeable principles of God’s moral government, and of his dealings with the visible church, and with nations in their political capacity in the present day: and it would be well for us to study the Old Testament, in this light, more than we do. A very profitable use also may be made, in popular discourse, of the multitude of precious promises made to ancient Israel, in applying them to believers, the true spiritual Israel. But in the sober and critical interpretation of many of the prophecies, this freedom is utterly unallowable, and cannot be sustained.

Objecting to the figurative mode of interpretation formerly, I noticed at some length, that the predictions relating to the coming of Christ in the flesh, were all literal, and literally fulfilled. I remarked also, that one use of prophecy was to furnish a standing evidence that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah promised to the fathers : and of the truth of the divine origin of the Scriptures. But such a purpose the prophetic Scriptures would not have been calculated to serve, if there had been room left for such a variety of conjectures as the figurative interpretation affords — if the sense in which they were to be understood

had not been definite and easy of comprehension — in other words, had they not been intended to be understood in their literal and obvious sense. Again, as I mentioned in a former lecture, the literal mode of interpretation was the prevailing practice of the writers of the earliest and purest ages of the Christian church; and that it has been the practice of the church of Rome, to adopt the figurative mode.

I am aware that many are of opinion that the predictions relating to the future prosperity of Israel; and especially those referring to their restoration to their own land, had their accomplishment in their return from the Babylonish captivity. Those relating to that restoration were all, of course, fulfilled in their season. Here, the question may arise, How shall we distinguish between those predictions which have, and those which have not been fulfilled? This will not be difficult, when we refer at once to those relating to prosperity, mercy, and favor to Israel in the New Testament as most evidently not yet fulfilled. Paul, writing to the Gentile church in Rome, has these words: “I would not, Brethren, have you to be ignorant of this mystery lest you should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in: and so *all Israel shall be saved.*” Even in the Old Testament prophecies of this class, we can draw a line of distinction between those that have, and those that have not been fulfilled. Those spoken by the prophets that rose up after their release from Babylon, could not possibly refer to that event. I will quote only one from Zech-

ariah who wrote after their return, chap. x. 6: "I will strengthen the house of Judah: and I will *bring them again to place* them: for I have mercy on them: and they shall be as if I had not cast them off I will hiss for them and *gather them*, for I have redeemed them *I will sow them among the people*, and they will *remember me in far countries* and I will *bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon.*" Again, those relating to the prosperity of the Jews in the days of the Messiah, are not yet fulfilled. Of this class is one in Jer. xxiii. 5: I read only one of each class, but there are many belonging to each kind. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a *righteous Branch*, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. And this is the name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness. Therefore behold the days come saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord liveth which brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt; but the Lord liveth which *brought up*, and *which led* the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from *all the countries* whither I had *driven them*: and *they shall dwell in their own land.*" Again, those which foretell a prosperity to Israel and Judah which is not to be succeeded by any division, distress, or calamity, but is to continue forever, have not yet been accomplished. The following is an example of this kind: Ezek. xxxvii. 22, "I will make them one nation upon the mountains of Israel, and *one king shall be king to them all*; and they shall *no more* be two nations, neither shall they

be divided into two kingdoms *any more at all* . . . and they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, even they and their children, and their children's children for *evermore* and the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them *forevermore*." Such is a very small specimen of prophecies not yet fulfilled; and these observations are worthy of more attention than I have time to bestow at present. The more I study them the more do I see the use of this portion of Scripture, and the harmony of the whole.

I am aware also that many regard these, and similar prophecies, as relating to the conversion of the Jews to Christianity, and that in merging in the gospel church they shall lose their identity as a people, and their national character.

I now see strong objections to that view. It seems impossible, with any consistency, to reconcile these constant references to places, cities, and usages in the land of Israel, with such a view. Such a use of language would render the Bible unintelligible. I believe it has been and is an obstacle to the conversion of the Jews, to try to persuade them to give up their Jewish affinities, and surrender all these glowing predictions in their behalf, and in behalf of that land given by covenant to their fathers.

And in addition to all this, the continued extraordinary *providences* of God in regard to that people, is a convincing argument in favor of their return to their own land as a nation. There have been many ancient nations conquered and overthrown: but what

became of the inhabitants? They became mingled with their conquerors, and at length swallowed up in the tide of time. Many ancient cities were destroyed, and laid in ruins; but they were either rebuilt and re-occupied, or forsaken and forgotten. But what people now make pilgrimages to Tyre or Babylon? Where is the bosom in which Troy or Carthage awakens a throb of patriotic feeling? Where are the people who have a hereditary right to sit down among such ruins, and weep because *their* "house is left to them desolate?" But there is one people who have existed distinct from all others for sixty generations, without a home or a country of their own. And there is one city which was destroyed — razed to its foundations — its inhabitants carried away captives, and sold into slavery — and forbidden, under the severest penalties, to visit the home of their fathers: and yet, though more than eighteen centuries have passed away, there is a people in whom thoughts of that city awakens the keenest emotions; and from the four winds of heaven the exiles of Jerusalem come to visit her, and mourn over her ruins. No city was ever so honored, or possessed such a charm. None but itself can now be repopled with precisely the same race which left it almost 2000 years ago. Why is all this? Why, when every other forsaken city, after an age or two, is forgotten by its people, why has Jerusalem such strong affinity for its outcast population — that the city refuses any other permanent inhabitants, and the old inhabitants refuse any other settled home? Nothing can solve this, unless it be, that God has some pur-

pose with the place and with the people; and this purpose has been revealed to us in these prophecies already quoted.

In connection with this, and agreeably to these prophecies, I may add further, that no nation has been allowed to settle in Jerusalem. It has long been "trodden down by the Gentiles, but," says Faber, in his exposition of the prophecies, "no one set of Gentiles has been allowed to tread it down long time together. It has been successively occupied by the Romans, the Persians, the Saracens, the Turks of the Seleucian line, the Egyptian Caliphs, the Latin Christians, the Egyptian Caliphs a second time, the Mamelucs, and now the Turks of the Ottoman race." Now, while all this has been going on, and while in their struggle to retain it, they have trodden down Jerusalem; the persecuted people whose it is, await in calm assurance the day when the Lord himself shall put them in perpetual possession.

Let us now consider what is said in regard to the time of this event. Here we turn to a prophecy of Christ himself, in Luke xxi. 24: "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles *until* the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." This expression, "*the times of the Gentiles*," is one concerning which, I believe, but few have a very distinct idea. It has been so with myself formerly. The truth is, I never thought much about it. Since I began a more close and earnest study of the subject, now gone over, I have occasionally asked intelligent Christians, and even ministers, what they thought was the precise meaning of it, but could obtain no satisfactory ex-

planation. There seems to be an impression something like the following — that “the times of the Gentiles” is analogous to the present gospel dispensation, which they suppose is to last till the end of time, and consequently will include in it the conversion of the Jews and of all the nations of the earth, and hence the Millennium. Now, since I have read many excellent authors, and studied the Bible more closely, I have come to a different conclusion — not different in substance, but in some respects.

In regard to the way how I came to my present views on the expression under consideration, it was by taking into view the different modes of the Divine government of mankind. God’s dealings in providence and grace towards the human race have been exercised under various forms of dispensation ; under each of which he has been trying them and proving them, and showing to themselves what spirit they are of, and at the same time magnifying his grace in saving some. The first form of probation was in *Paradise*, which failed and terminated after a short period. Next came the *Antediluvian period*, under which there was such a manifestation of human depravity as provoked him to destroy the whole race, with the exception of Noah and his family. Then the race was planted anew on the earth, and under favorable circumstances. But again they so degenerated that God, apparently, left them to themselves. But to show the riches and sovereignty of his grace, he chose from all the rest a single family, affording them peculiar favors and new revelations of his will. This constituted the *Patriarchal dispensation*, under

which, among Abraham's posterity, were some remarkable instances of faith. That terminated at length with awful destructions on their oppressors, in the judgments on Egypt. Next came the *Mosaic dispensation*, conferring still further light of revelation on that favored nation, and, in a great degree, confining the influences of his grace to themselves. That also, after a long period of great vicissitude, humanly speaking, proved a failure. The Jews, in many periods of their history, became very corrupt, and in none, perhaps, more so than just previous to the coming of Christ in the flesh. That dispensation closed with unparalleled judgments on that devoted nation, in the destruction of their city and their utter dispersion. Next comes the *Gentile dispensation*, or the times of the Gentiles; that is to say, the time allotted in the wisdom and goodness of God, to the gentile world for accepting the offered mercy of the Gospel, in order that *they*, too, might have *their* day of probation. This greatly surpassed the Mosaic dispensation, embracing, in its ample external privilege, every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. It opened the door of mercy to all, through faith in the Redeemer — obliterated all distinctions — broke down all partition walls — and united all in the participation of one common blessing, whether Greek or Jew, circumcision or uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free.

Thus far I agree with the general impression or belief, that the expression "times of the Gentiles," is analogous to, or of the same import as the present

Gospel dispensation. But I cannot agree — I cannot rationally or scripturally conclude from this passage that the present Gospel dispensation will continue to the end of time. When a time, or period of time is *fulfilled*, it is completed. Our common senses and the common meaning of the word teach this. I look into the lexicon for the Greek word here used, and find it signifies to fulfil, to bring to a full end, to accomplish, to complete. It is the same word that is used in such passages as these — John, vii. 8 : “ Jesus said unto them, go ye up to this feast; I go not yet up to this feast; for my time is not yet *full come* ” — not yet fulfilled. Again, Acts vii. 30 : “ When forty years were *expired*, there appeared to him,” that is Moses, “ in the wilderness of Sinai, an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.” When forty years were *expired* — the very same word as in the case before us. The passage then reads — “ Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the gentiles *until* the times of the Gentiles — or the Gospel dispensation is expired. Here then are two cotemporaneous events — Jerusalem *ceasing* to be trodden down of the gentiles — and the *expiration* of the Gospel dispensation, let the period be when it may. If you will have it away after the Millennium, at the end of time, then there is no hope, no prospect of the restoration of Israel all that time. On the other hand, if you take the present signs in favor of the Jews, and of their return to their own land, as I showed you in the lecture before last, most significantly to prognosticate the speedy approach of that

event, then you may lay it up in your minds that the Christian dispensation is also drawing to a close. Which horn of the dilemma will you choose ?

I will here quote to you again Christ's parable of the fig-tree which he spoke in immediate reference to this period, and let me remind you that the fig-tree is the symbol or emblem of the Jewish nation. "Now learn a parable of the fig-tree ; when his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh ; so likewise ye, when ye shall see these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." I will repeat to you what I said before, about the present signs of the revival of national life among the Jews. It has been during the last thirty years only that the Jew has been suffered to live within the walls of the city of his fathers ; and now there are more Jews in Jerusalem than there have been during the last seventeen centuries. This is a movement in the direction of their fulness. Among the Jews themselves there is now a movement, and an impulse unprecedented in depth, intensity and spread. There are books recently written which urge on the nations to help them to their own land. They are organizing plans for repossessing Palestine, and both in this country and in England, millions of money have been secured for carrying out their plans. This seems to be what the Saviour refers to in the parable, by the fig-tree budding and putting forth leaves. Then mark his application. " Verily I say unto you, *that* generation shall not pass till all these things shall be fulfilled " — *that* generation which lives to see this putting forth of leaves, — this

beginning and revival of national life, shall not pass. Brethren, these are signs for us to study and improve, during the brief space remaining for our warfare and probation on earth. How cheering these to the heaving bosom of the true child of God, looking and waiting for the coming of his Saviour: and how awakening to those who are conscious they have not yet so improved their season of grace as to make their calling and election sure!

I may observe here, that these views were studied by me, and committed to paper more than two years ago. I will now quote to you a passage from the last published volume, only a few months ago, of the many writings of Doctor Cumming of London. He is now considered the most accurate student of prophecy now living. Speaking of the remarkable aspects the Jews now present, he says, "When the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, this restoration takes place. What are those times? As soon as the last believer has been gathered from the mass of the nations of the earth, and added to the company of the church of the redeemed, the times of the Gentiles will be fulfilled. As soon as the Gospel has been preached, not to *convert* all nations, but as a *witness* to all nations, and the inhabitants around the pole have been brought within its sound, then the time of the end is at hand. As soon as Mahometanism expires, the crescent wanes, and the mosque of the Moslem resounds with the praises of the God of Abraham, the times of the Gentiles will have come to an end. As soon as the great Antichrist shall be overthrown, and Babylon sink like a millstone in the mighty deep, the times of the Gentiles will be fulfilled."

Let us now turn attention to another passage of Scripture throwing light on the subject under review, contained in Revelation xvi. 12. "And the sixth angel poured out his vial on the great river Euphrates, and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared." It has been shown most satisfactorily, from past history, that the prophesies contained under the five preceding vials have been fully accomplished. The symbol made use of in the sixth is very significant, and has been interpreted by all the most eminent students of prophecy to represent the Turkish, or Mahometan power. That empire actually took its rise at Bagdad, on the Euphrates; but in course of time, like a mighty stream overflowing its banks, it spread over a great part of Christendom. "From the Chinese frontier," says Gibbon the historian, "he stretched his jurisdiction west and south as far as the neighborhood of Constantinople, and the holy city of Jerusalem, and the spicy groves of Arabia Felix, an extent of dominion which surpassed the Asiatic reign of Cyrus and the Caliphs." Now this great power was not to be destroyed by a single blow, like some ancient dynasties, nor as the mystic Babylon, like a millstone cast into the sea, but gradually, like the drying up of the waters of a river. This has been actually the case. This evaporation began in the year 1820. It had then reached the zenith of its power, but ever since it has been gradually decaying. I will show this by a few brief statistics. In 1820, Ali Pasha declared his independance of the Sultan. In 1821 the Greek insurrection broke out, and 10,000 insurgents

raised the standard of rebellion in Wallachia. In 1822, the Persians defeated an army of 52,000 Turks ; and in the same year Aleppo and Antioch were destroyed by earthquakes. In 1823-24 the Greek rebellion raged and ended in their triumph. In 1825, the Janissaries, a most powerful body in the Turkish army, revolted and were massacred. In 1826, a fire consumed 6000 houses in the most wealthy and magnificent part of Constantinople. In 1827, the battle of Navarino destroyed the Turkish and Egyptian fleets, and gave the command of the Black Sea to Russia. In 1828 Russia declared war against the Turks, and the result was the deliverance of Moldavia, Wallachia, and Servia from the Turkish yoke — these principalities we now read of in the present eastern war. In 1829, the French conquered Algiers, converting a Turkish province into a French colony. Next followed the severe war with the Pasha of Egypt, and continued rebellions in Syria. Other facts might be adduced, but it is unnecessary to say a word further on the state of Turkey. It is a mere relic of its former power. Whether it will become disintegrated as a distinct nation, or be converted to Christianity, it is not for us to say. Ten millions of its subjects now belong to the Greek church. Thus the Mahometan power, the chief barrier in the way of the restoration of the Jews to their own land, like the waters of a small stream, is almost dried up.

It is further stated in the passage last quoted, that the drying up of the river Euphrates, is, “that the way of the *kings of the east* may be prepared.” This symbol, the kings of the east, has been regarded

by all interpreters as representing the nation of the Jews, whether from the fact that their great first founder was of eastern origin, or that the descendants of the ten tribes may come from somewhere in the east, I know not, but this has been the generally received interpretation of the passage. I have no doubt that it is the true one, and that the way is being prepared, and almost ready for their triumphant return. Comparing the aspects and tendencies of these providences just glanced at, with those at present visible among the Jews themselves, all confirm us in the belief that that glorious event is not very distant.

You may observe, that in this discussion I necessarily avoid entering into details. All I proposed, in the commencement, was a brief examination of the mere outlines, or prominent features of the general subject. This is all we ought to expect from prophecy. It would defeat its object by entering into minute particulars too plainly. Minute particulars are sometimes given, but these can be understood only as they come into actual accomplishment. Hence some writers on this subject, by assuming, and attempting to prove too much, injure the cause of truth : and by quoting Scriptures of questionable application, throw suspicion on the whole theory. I have tried to avoid this.

Taking a brief review from this point, I think I have shown from most obvious Scriptural testimony, that the Second Coming of Christ will be immediately after the tribulations of the Jewish nation ; and in immediate connection with the destruction of the

man of sin, and hence pre-millennial. I think I have proved the simple fact of two resurrections, that of the righteous previous to, and that of the wicked after the thousand years. I have shown, from the prophecy of Christ, that the *termination* of the Jewish calamities, or treading down of Jerusalem, is contemporaneous with the *expiration* of the times of the Gentiles, or of the present Gospel dispensation and day of grace to mankind. I have said that it was the current opinion of the most eminent students of prophecy, that the drying up of the river Euphrates is the symbol of the exhaustion of the Turkish power ; and that the kings of the east is the symbol of the Jewish nation. I have stated, from facts, that the Jews, in all parts of the world, are in a state of expectation and preparation, waiting for their way to be prepared, and for the signal of the nations, to take their march for Palestine. Now then, to what conclusion are we driven ? On the continued existence of Mahometan rule in Turkey, providentially considered, hang the destinies of the human race for eternity !

Brethren, no doubt you think this a rash and sweeping inference ; but there is Scripture ground for the conclusion. I don't suppose you are prepared to receive it. I know the common objections. I know the influence of long cherished opinions. You say there is a great deal to be done yet before the Millennium — that all the world must be converted before Christ comes. It is the current opinion that the delusions of Popery will disappear before the convincing force of truth — that there is a power in the church

and in her ordinances, and the means of grace now in use, that will drive heathenism and deism, and formalism out of the world. I confess I have given up that idea. Not that I doubt for a moment, the power of God to accomplish this by his spirit, under the present instrumentalities, if it *pleased* him; but I cannot perceive, from the state of the world at large, nor from the Bible revelation, that he *intends* to do so. But you take up the prophets, too, to show that I am mistaken, saying, "The gospel must first be published among all nations." "This gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." I believe this as firmly as you do. The only question is, what is implied in this publication of the gospel? I can scarcely think of a nation to which the proclamation, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believed in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," has not been made. I speak not of the prevalency of a pure gospel, nor the sanctifying results of the truth, but of the revelation of the name of Jesus as a saviour. The prophecy quoted does not contemplate nor prove the conversion of the nations, but the publication of the gospel as a witness unto them. We know not to what extent an early publication of it was made in Eastern Asia, by the apostles and their immediate successors. Western Asia has all been once evangelized. Northern Africa had its early bishops, and is now under the sway of a Christian nation. All around its other coasts, the standard of the cross has been raised. Europe is all nominally Christian, and

so is North America. Even South America, although the gross darkness of Popery covers it, has generally heard of the name of Jesus. Australia has a Christian population — and the other islands of the sea have had their missionaries. There is not a tongue, kindred, people, or nation but which the Bible, now translated into 180 languages and dialects, may reach.

But, lest this may be deemed exaggerating, I would add, that with the present facilities for publishing the gospel, a few years may accomplish more than fifty years in times past. In addition to this, when the way of the Jews is prepared, their restoration and conversion will be such striking facts, as under divine influences, may be the occasion of a greater religious movement in the world than has ever been known or dreamed of. Whether affected in the more ordinary ways, or, as is almost certain, with miracles intermingled, the result will be most remarkable. It is foretold that there will be a movement amid the nations, as preparatory to this. Speaking to the Jews, God says — Isaiah xliii. 4 — “Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable; and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. Fear not for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west: I will say to the north, give up: and to the south, keep not back, bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth. Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers, etc., etc. It appears evident that the conversion of the Jews shall be subsequent to their restoration to their own land. The twelfth of Zecha-

riah is almost as plain as history, viewed in this light — “And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications : and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born,” etc. The people and the places mentioned here, demonstrate that this event will take place in Judea and Jerusalem. Of all prophetic truths this is the most plain and positive ; and when it does take place, it will still farther strike the world with awe and astonishment — when all of a sudden, probably, they see the inhabitants of Jerusalem, with streaming eyes looking on the pierced One. When the veil is rent from Israel’s eyes, it will be rent from a thousand prophecies, and from the hearts of wondering nations. Then many predictions will be made plain that never were understood before : and prophecy, which some now seem afraid to study, or have it commented on, will appear the most interesting portion of God’s book.

But, methinks I hear an objection from a warm-hearted Christian. You cannot bear to think of the Gospel day terminating so soon, while yet 600,000,000 of our fellow beings are spiritually strangers to the way of salvation. I confess I felt the weight of this objection when I began to look closely at this subject. Can it be, I have thought, that Christ will come at the time, and in the manner shown, and find

the world in the deplorable condition it is? But what can we say? Our Christian sympathy, and that of every faithful minister for a single community, enjoying the Gospel to the full, has often gone out in vain. On this subject there is no room for even pious speculation. After all, what argument is in this objection? From what precedent do you reason? Think of the antediluvian world perishing, and only eight saved — of the teeming population of the cities of the plain, destroyed and only three escaped! You think the Gospel has more power to save, and different results must follow. But think of Jerusalem — enjoying the personal teaching of Christ — the preaching of the Apostles — and the day of Pentecost — and yet how very few gathered out of that city and nation! In the populous cities where Paul preached, how few believed! Look at the most powerful revivals of modern days — and only a sprinkling of the people gathered into the church! You think this a dark view — a gloomy representation. I cannot help it. Human nature is awfully depraved. The world is dreadfully wicked. Christ's people at the present day, compared with the millions of the world, are a "little flock:" and yet when gathered to the New Jerusalem, it will be "a great multitude whom no man can number" — enough to witness to the universe the glorious grace, mercy, and long-suffering of the Almighty. God has been strangely kind — infinitely patient towards a world overgrown with iniquity. He has been trying them under a variety of religious dispensations, and how, under all, has his patience been abused!

I will go further with you. All whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, in every "tongue, kindred, people, and nation," will be converted to God by the Gospel, and for this purpose it must be preached unto them. But it will have been sufficiently preached for this purpose when it shall have reached the ear, not of every individual, but of every one "chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world." The object of preaching among the Gentiles, said the Apostle James, was "to *take out* of them a people for himself." You believe in the "election of grace." What know you when that chosen number will be made up? It is a rational and legitimate feeling, and the bounden duty in christians, to *desire* and *labor* that millions in every nation may be converted; and this desire has stimulated, and ought now, more than ever, to arouse to missionary effort, and earnest prayer, for the time is short. Yet this desire cannot extend the meaning of the language by which Christ describes the sign. We are bound by the limits of the *word spoken*. His word bids us watch for the time when the Gospel shall have been "published among all nations for a witness to them." In whatsoever way this publication may be interpreted, it is limited by the period when the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled, and Jerusalem ceases to be trodden down of the Gentiles.

LECTURE VII.

PROPHETIC NUMBERS AND SIGNS.

Watch, therefore ; for ye know not what *hour* your Lord doth come.

MATTHEW xxiv. 42.

IN this lecture I propose to consider some of the prophetic numbers and signs. There is an idea generally prevalent, that prophecy is of little or no use to us, until we see its accomplishment in the events of the past — that we ought not attempt to interpret, but wait till their actual performance distinctly throws light upon them. This, I now think, is an erroneous idea : and nowhere encouraged in the word of God. On the contrary, in many cases, it plainly implies that things foretold, ought to be studied, because for this very end they were inspired ; and that they may, though darkly, as through a glass, be understood by the servants and people of God. The first verse of the book of Revelation conveys this idea. “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass ; and he sent and signified it by his servant John.” It is not simply, to show unto his servant John — the word is in the plural — to show to his *servants*, that is, to all Christians, by his servant John — not things which have come to pass — but which must shortly come to pass. It

would seem that Daniel explained to the captives in Babylon, things future ; and thus comforted them, not from past records, but unfulfilled prophecies. Our Saviour predicted to his apostles the destruction of Jerusalem, and told them how they were to conduct themselves in the prospect. It was intimated to them that responsibilities were incurred by their knowing things not yet come to pass ; and history informs us that while 1,100,000 unbelieving Jews were involved in that destruction, the Christians, by taking heed to the words of Christ, escaped to Pella, and not one of them perished. One office of the Holy Spirit of God is, that "He will show you things to come." I believe this has reference to Christians in all ages. "This second epistle, beloved," says Peter, "I now write to you, in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance ; that ye may be *mindful* of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets" — and he then goes on to show them some aspect and signs of the last days. Why was it that the Jews rejected the Messiah when he came to suffer ? Just because they neglected the study of unfulfilled prophecy. And may not we also be neglecting privileges, if not despising duties, by paying no attention to the signs of his second coming.

I would suggest another thought worthy of notice here. In all past ages of the world, God has revealed to his servants signs and warnings, premonitory of great and solemn events of his providence. In some instances he gave precise dates, and definite numbers, on which to calculate ; and if he has done

this in reference to events long since passed into history, is it too much to expect that the same has been done, and for the same use, in regard to great and stupendous events yet in the future? Thus, for instance, as far back as the flood, when God revealed his purpose to Noah, he said, "Yet the days of man shall be one hundred and twenty years." In this case the prophecy was the measure of the term allowed to an unbelieving world. Again, God revealed to Abraham that the duration of the bondage in Egypt would be four hundred and thirty years; and so exactly was this prophetic period fulfilled, that Moses the sacred historian thus wrote — Exod. xii. 41. "At the end of four hundred and thirty years, the self-same day, it came to pass that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt." Jeremiah foretold that seventy years were determined for the captivity of the Jews in Babylon; and again this prophecy was literally fulfilled. Long before it came to pass, Daniel said that, "from the going forth the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem unto Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and three-score and two weeks." This prophecy and specific period made such an impression on the world, that not only a few devout believers in Jerusalem, were looking for it, but, as Roman historians tell us, the very heathen of that day, to a wide extent, were in expectation of the birth of some illustrious personage on earth. May not we then expect, I say, that the great crowning events of the present dispensation, will not be left without premonitory signs and warnings, as clear and emphatic.

The measurement of prophetic periods, as many of you are aware, is given in days, weeks, and months, which all students of prophecy agree to reckon according to the measure of a literal year for a day, just as in a plan or map, an inch, or quarter of an inch, is made to represent a mile. A similar mode of calculation is seen in such passages as these — Num. xiv. 34. “After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, each day for a year shall ye bear your iniquity, even forty years.” Again: Ezek. iv. 6. “Thou shall bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days ; I have appointed thee each day for a year.” Thus prophecy contains its own plan, the measure of its own scale.

There is one prominent and familiar prophetic number, repeated in different forms, but in all substantially the same. Let me give you an example or two. In Rev. 12th chap., we have the symbol of a “woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.” When persecuted she “fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God that they should feed her a thousand two hundred and threescore days” — that is, one thousand two hundred and sixty prophetic days, or literal years. In the same chapter, in reference to the same thing, it is said, there, she “is nourished for a time, times, and half a time” — that is, three hundred and sixty, the number of days in a year, twice three hundred and sixty, and half of three hundred and sixty, all which added together make one thousand two hundred and sixty, as before. This woman is the symbol of the

spiritual church of true believers, fleeing into the wilderness — that is, retiring from the view of the world — disappearing, as it were ought of sight, in consequence of the error, superstition, and corruption then becoming universally prevalent in the rise of the apostate church of Rome.

Again in the 11th chap. we have the symbol of two witnesses prophesying in sackcloth, “a thousand, two hundred and threescore days” — that is, in depressed circumstances. This embraces the same period as the former; and represents the succession of the few faithful witnesses for the truth, even during the darkest ages of popery. The number two is specified, as that number in the Mosaic law, was necessary to bear valid testimony; and also to indicate that in that dark period they were reduced to the smallest number consistent with such a testimony, or it may mean that they would be numerically *two*, as there was one line of faithful witnesses in the east proclaiming the glorious truths of the gospel, called Paulicians; and there was another succession of witnesses called Waldenses, testifying to the same truths in the west.

Then again in the 13th chap. we have the symbol of a “beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.” This symbol, without any doubt on the subject, represents Popery. It is said of it — “And *power* was given unto him to continue forty and two months.” Forty and two multiplied by thirty — the number of days in a month, gives us, as before, 1,260 prophetic days, or literal years.

I state these things without any illustration, merely to show, that as in past ages, God gives us signs and warnings, symbols, and even dates, which, in common with all other Scripture, it is our duty to observe, study, and be instructed by them. And surely we, who are not deeply read in Scripture, or in universal history, may, at least be humble enough to avail ourselves of the researches of those eminent scholars who have devoted their learning and piety to the study of these things. It is not pretended that they all agree exactly in their calculations; but if, on the whole, they coincide as to the symbols, and the things they represent, we may form some judgment of the times in which we live. It is a common observation among those who have their eyes open to the present aspects of the world, that we live in a very eventful age. If so, it would be wise in us to ascertain, as far as we can, what these aspects portend.

It is a fact of history that about the year 532 of the Christian era, the celebrated Justinian code was promulgated; by which the Papal ecclesiastical power was armed with wide *civil* jurisdiction, and it was authoritatively declared to be heresy, and worthy of death, to dissent from the Roman Catholic religion. The mystery of iniquity had begun to work long before this; but this may be regarded as the inauguration of Popery, properly so called. It then received the civil power of the sword, and a fearful use was made of it, as all skilled in church history well know. In the prophecy it says—"power was given to him to continue forty and two months," or, as we have

seen, 1,260 years. Now let this 1,260 be added to the 532 before mentioned, when it received from the Emperor Justinian the *power* of the sword, and it brings us to the year 1792. Then during the French revolution, France, which had for 1,300 years been the oldest son of the church, entirely threw off its allegiance. The National Assembly first abolished the tithes, and next confiscated the lands of the church. Soon after 4,000 monasteries were suppressed and rifled, and the clergy of France required to abjure all allegiance to the Pope.

Then, last of all, Napoleon I. in the height of his career, issued the decrees of Schoenbrunn, about 1792 or '93. The substance of these decrees was — the total abolition of the temporal power of the Pope — the incorporation of Rome as the second city of the French empire — the appointment of a committee for the civil government of Rome — and lastly, a pension settled on the Pope on the withdrawal of all his temporal immunities. To these decrees all the crowned heads on the Continent of Europe at the time, gave in their adhesion. Then, we believe this prophetic period of 1,260 years of Popish *power* terminated.

This is perhaps a new reckoning to some who may be wondering in their minds when that remarkable period is to come to its close. I consider it as a very rational and satisfactory calculation. Since then every influence, infidel, political and Christian, has been operating against the great apostacy. And what is its power now? A mere shadow. Without a foreign force the Pope could not sustain himself in Rome a single day. How long it will take for the system to die out we

cannot say. It is being "consumed with the spirit of his mouth," waiting only to be "destroyed by the brightness of his coming." Thus you see, while prophecy gives specific numbers, it is from one period, or prominent event, to another, but they do not lead us on to the end of the dispensation. In regard to the final period we are left to gather our information from the signs of the times; "for of that hour knoweth no man, not even the angels in heaven."

Let me now give you another instance of this kind. It is a fact of history that about the year 480 before Christ, the Persian empire, being at the height of its glory, was overthrown in the defeat of Xerxes and his mighty army in Greece. Now look, at your leisure, at Daniel's vision of the ram and the he goat, in the 8th chapter. I read here the angel's explanation of it: "The ram which thou sawest having two horns, are the kings of Media and Persia. And the rough goat is the king of Grecia; and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king." In the vision it is said—"when he was strong the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones towards the four winds of heaven. And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land." This great horn, most evidently, represents Alexander the Great. While he was in the midst of his power—"when he was strong," he was cut off, and his empire divided among his four generals. I quote again the angel's explanation—"Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of

the nation, but not in his power. And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sayings, shall stand up." This last is the explanation of the "little horn" which, according to the best commentators, is the symbol or representative of the Turco-Mahometan power. It arose from one of the four kingdoms referred to, at the time "when the transgressors were come to the full," that is, when the Christian churches in the east had become utterly corrupt — this power was raised as a scourge to them. This was actually the fact in the Mahomedan conquests. The character of its chief, a king of fierce countenance, disclosing dark sayings, is a fac simile of Mahomet and the Kōran. I merely state these results and conclusions, without illustration at present. If I can only awaken the attention of intelligent Christians to a further examination, my object is accomplished. As before, I can recommend you to Dr. Cumming's writings as the best on these subjects.

But I was going to give you another specimen of a prophetic period and its fulfilment. Turn to the chronology of the vision in the same 8th chap. of Daniel. "And I heard one saint speaking; and another saint said unto that certain saint that spake, How long shall be the vision? And he said unto me, unto two thousand and three hundred days." Now, let the 480 years before Christ — the beginning of the vision as before stated — be subtracted from the 2,300, and it terminates in the year 1820. At that date, as I showed you in last lecture, by a number of

brief statistics, the Turco-Mahometan power began to decline, and has been waning ever since — then the river Euphrates began to be dried up, and is now almost evaporated.

I state this to show that in this case, as in the case of Popery, the prophetic number directs us from one period, or prominent event, to another, but not down to the end of the dispensation. Here, as before, we are left to our own observation of the signs of the times; and if signs indicate anything, they indicate the speedy termination of Turkish or Mahometan rule. It appears to me, as we have seen in this and former lectures, that three great periods are converging to a point, viz., the end of Turkish domination — the termination of Jewish tribulation — and the overthrow of Roman Catholic abominations. It is possible they may meet about the same point of time, but of that period I have nothing to say. To all human appearances, it cannot be very far distant.

While remarking on the prophetic signs, we can scarcely avoid observing an ominous sign of the times looming up in the north. In view of the conspicuous part that Russia is now acting, and apparently destined to act on the stage of this world, we might reason from analogy that its progress would not be entirely overlooked in the pages of prophecy. Is there anything in Scripture to justify such a conclusion? I do think there is, and will now call your attention to some intimations of this.

In Rev. xvi. 17, under the action of the seventh vial, which evidently describes the closing period of the present dispensation, we have the following sym-

bol: — “And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent, and men blasphemed God, because of the plague of the hail, for the plague thereof was exceeding great.” Hail is understood by interpreters to be the symbol of a northern invasion. In a former part of the prophecy of this book, it is used to represent the irruption of the Goths and Vandals, who came down from the north, like a storm, on the Roman empire. A similar storm out of the north is threatened in the closing scene. There seems to be a distinct allusion to this scene in the 38th and 39th chapters of Ezekiel. That prophecy is directed against “the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal.” Before quoting it, I will remind you that in the 10th chap. of Genesis, among the sons of Japheth, the eldest son of Noah, from whom the nations of Europe are descended, we have mention of Gomer, Magog, Meshech and Tubal. From these the Scythians, Tartars and other northern nations are descended. Now, in predictions relating to these nations or their descendants in the “*latter years and latter days*,” which is the date of this prophecy, it is reasonable to suppose that in the style of ancient prophecy, we should find the names of their first founders. These considerations give a solemn significancy at present to this prophecy. I will quote only parts of it that appear most significant, and that give, as it were, a key to the whole. You may read the whole of both chapters at your leisure. “Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophecy against him, and

say, 'Thus saith the Lord God, . . . I will turn thee back and put hooks in thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thy army, . . . Persia, Ethiopia and Lybia with them, . . . *Gomer* with all his bands; the house of Togarmah, of the *north* quarters . . . After many days thou shalt be visited : in the *latter years* thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste : but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely, all of them. — And thou shalt come from thy place in the *north parts*, thou and many people with thee, all of them riding on horses, a great company and a mighty army. And thou shalt come up against my people Israel, as a cloud to cover the land : *it shall be in the latter days* : and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes.' I attempt no comment here, further than to say that it looks very much like the aggressive movements of Russia, and evidently relates to the last times. Perhaps part of this long prophecy is already fulfilled, but the greater part still looks to the future. It relates to a period after the restoration of Israel to their own land. Whatever may be the issue of the campaign in the Crimea for the present, it does not affect the aspects of the case as an ominous sign of the times. Even although Russia should be quelled, and a peace effected, there can be no permanent tranquillity. We know too much, from the past, of the policy of Russia to suppose she will rest from her

aggressions; and the concluding portions of this long prophecy plainly indicate that she will not give over the struggle till it terminates in her own destruction and that of all who oppose the coming kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Permit me to lay before you the opinion of learned Jews on this question. There is a periodical published in London, written by unconverted Jews, entitled "The Hebrew Observer." In the one dated Feb. 10th, 1854, there is a leading article, most ably written, entitled "The Eastern Question." It contains the anxious reasonings of the Jews themselves, in regard to the probable prospects that may turn up for them in the issue of the Eastern war. Among other things they state, that in the prophecy just quoted, it reads, the *prince* of the land of Magog, the prince of *Rosh*, *Meshech* and *Tubal*; which by a slight variation of words, in the course of time, now indicate to us, the modern *Russia* and its two capitals, *Moscow* and *Tobolsk*. If so, it adds to the solemn significance of this prophecy, in these latter days.

It may be worth while also, in this connection merely to state, that in a recent number of a periodical published in Calcutta, in the East Indies, called "The Friend of India," there is an article, confirming what some of you know, viz., the strong aggressive movements of Russia in the north-east of Asia. It states, among other things, from official information, the probability that the Emperor of China may yet be assisted in his struggles, by tribes set in motion from St. Petersburg; and concludes with these

words : “ If these reports be true, the Russians may yet be masters of China, and the Romanoffs one step nearer to their object — the subjugation of the world. Russian influence in China would be most disastrous to the British Empire.”

To the same import, let me state to you also an opinion of Napoleon Bonaparte, expressed some forty years ago, and preserved among many other memorable sayings of that remarkable man, while confined at St. Helena. Speaking of England, he says : “ If Russia quarrels with you, she marches off to India an army of 70,000 good soldiers, which to Russia is nothing, and 100,000 Cossacks, and England loses India. Above all other powers, Russia is most to be feared, especially by you. All this I foresaw. I see into futurity farther than others, and I wanted to establish a barrier against those barbarians, by reëstablishing the kingdom of Poland, and putting Poniatowsky at the head of it as king ; but your *embeciles* of ministers would not consent When they see the finest countries of Europe overrun, and a prey to these northern barbarians, they will say, *Napoleon was right.*”

I have observed, that, apparently, some great events are gathering round us, and approaching their consummation — viz., the exhaustion of Turkey, the restoration of Israel, the destruction of Rome, and the part Russia seems destined to act in the battle of the great day. In addition, let me suggest to you another. I have long been partial to the idea that the seventh thousand year of the world, from its creation, would be its Sabbath of rest, and this is the opinion of

Jews, ancient and modern, and hence, that the close of the six thousand would introduce us to the Millennium. The chronology set down in our marginal Bibles, removes that period to more than a hundred years hence. But there is some dispute about the correctness of that calculation. There is an old Jewish chronology which places the birth of Christ much more than 4000 years after the creation; and one Clinton, an eminent chronologist, proves that the seventh millenary of the world begins somewhere about ten years from the present.

Quoting from documents having some bearing on the subject before us, and I can scarcely refrain from introducing to your notice a remarkable pamphlet just published in this country, from one written by a pious and sober-minded clergyman of the Church of England. It is a compilation from several sources, chiefly extracts from the "Christian Annotator," and from some travels in the Crimea. The question agitated in that pamphlet is rather a startling one to some, and may perhaps excite a smile in others — viz., "*Is Sebastopol Armageddon?*" The information presented is briefly the following — "Some 60 years ago, a French traveller in the Crimea, when the site of the present Sebastopol was nothing more than a mean Tartar village, observed the remarkable advantages it possessed for a fort and harbor. His observations were reported at St. Petersburg, and forthwith the buildings and fortifications of the place were set on foot. Some time afterward, Catherine II., then Empress, to give celebrity to the place, gave it the new name of Sebastopol. This name is a compound

from two Greek words, viz., *sebastos*, august, or illustrious, and *polis*, a city. Sebastopolis, or Sebastopol, signifies the illustrious city. Now it has lately occurred to some Hebrew and Greek scholars, that the compound Hebrew word, Armageddon, conveys precisely the same meaning, from the word *Ar*, a city, and *Maged*, excellent or illustrious. I merely state this fact as one of some interest at present, when compared with a passage in Rev. xvi. I stated before, in a reference to this chapter, that under the pouring out of the sixth vial "of the wrath of God upon the earth," occurred the drying up of the Euphrates, or the exhaustion of Turkey. Now, under the action of the same vial we find the gathering of "the kings of the earth, and of the whole world into a place called, in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon." You are aware that John wrote in the Greek language; and but for this Hebrew digression, it might have read thus, he gathered them together into a place called Sebastopol. The reason of this Hebrew digression may have been to throw some obscurity over the prophecy, as it was not meet that prophecy should be as explicit as history. Even if he had written it out Sebastopol, it would have been an enigma until fifty years ago, when the place first took that name.

But further, this pamphlet informs us, on good authority, that there is a valley in the Crimea, inhabited by an ancient colony of Jews, who have retained more of their original integrity, as Jews, than any other portion of their nation; and that they have given to their location the name of the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Compare this with Joel, chap. 3d: "I

will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people, and for my heritage, Israel." Again, in the same chapter: "Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe; come get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great," etc.

Brethren, I merely state these things for your information, you may take them for what they are worth. I know no more than you do, what will be the progress and results of these commotions in Europe and Asia. I do not say, like Napoleon—"I see into futurity farther than others." I do not *foretell*, but merely *forthtell* some of the solemn predictions God has presented to us in his word, and observe the remarkable coincidence of some of them with things taking place, as it were, under our own eye. I consider it as almost sluggish indifference to shut our eyes and keep silence, when there is such an intensity in the affairs of the world, and struggle of the nations.

Speaking on the prophetic signs, we may here notice as one the *intensity* of the present age. This seems to be intimated by that sign given by Daniel, in the very close of his vision, and referring to the last days. "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Often, when I see the mail-train running past, carrying, perhaps 400 or 500 persons at the rate of 40 or 50 miles an hour, I am reminded of this sign, and the period it indicates. Even amid the

bustle it creates, there is something in it calculated to solemnize the thoughtful mind. It would seem as if scientific knowledge had almost reached its maximum. Man seems to have made the nearest approach to the power of God, when he makes the lightnings carry his messages! The depths of the earth have been explored, and the heights of the starry heavens been measured; and it seems a problem whether human skill can proceed much further. There has appeared a criticism on the Hebrew text of this passage; of its correctness I am not qualified to vouch. It has been said that it will bear this translation. Many shall to and fro, and *knowledge shall be darted*. If so, what a magnificent prophecy of our electric telegraph — uttered more than 2,600 years ago! As in old age time seems to pass on more rapid wing than when we were young; so the affairs of the world, as it grows old, seem to be more rapidly progressive. We live in years in which, it would seem, is crowded the work of centuries, in former times. The future approaches us like a rolling tide, and with destinies solemn as eternity, calling on us to ascertain our relative position. There is intensity in everything, even in religion and its opposite. Doctor Baird alluded to this more than once, in a recent address heard by some of you, when making his observations on the religious state of Europe, in his late visit there. He said there is more Christianity and more infidelity than ever — that is, Christians are taking higher grounds, and infidels becoming more gross in their speculations. •

Another sign given by an inspired writer, is the

selfishness of the age, 2 Tim. iii. —“ This know also, that in the *last days*, perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boast-ers, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, un-thankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God ; having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof.” What a catalogue ! It may be deemed uncharitable to suppose that this is a portrait of the present age ; but I cannot help thinking that the world is approaching such a state of things rather than otherwise. We rejoice in the progress and success of Christian Mis-sions ; but we cannot but observe, on the other hand, even more activity on the part of Satan and his emis-saries. In the fairest portions of the continent of Europe, and in its most enlightened nations, how few evangelical Christians, and how infidel the great masses of the population ! In a religious paper of last week it is stated, there are in Protestant Germany 6,000 ministers having no pastoral duties — doing nothing — standing all day idle ! Even in the most favored Pro-Testant lands of the world, how much deism, indiffer-entism, and formalism prevail. In view of the superior light and opportunities enjoyed, it may be a question, whether to the all-seeing eye, the world appears better than it was thirty years ago. Although I may be in the minority in these views, the passage above quoted seems to bear us out in the idea. There is a time coming, described by him who sees the end from the beginning, “ As distress of nations with per-

plexity; men's hearts failing them for fear; and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." And there are thinking men, even among those that do not study prophecy, but look only on facts and phenomena, who feel their hearts fainting because of what they foresee in the future. I will here quote a saying of a Dr. Arnold, who was no fanatic, but a man of calm reflective mind, and a profound thinker. "My sense," says he, "of the evil of the times that are coming, and of the prospects to which I am bringing up my poor children, is overwhelming; times are coming in which the devil will fight his best, and that in good earnest."

I have time to mention only one more sign of the coming of Christ, and that is, the *apathy and unbelief* that will be felt in regard to it. One sign that he is near is the fact that Christians will explain this nearness away. There is nothing more plainly set forth in the Bible, than that in these last days men shall say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" "When they shall say peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them." Is not this what men are saying now? Whenever this question is agitated, the multitude treat it with lightness. They will not even give it a candid hearing; nor search the Scriptures "whether these things be so." If men will thus fulfil Scripture, I have nothing to say further. I have nearly finished my testimony on the subject, and if it is rejected, I hope and pray that none of you will reject the counsel of our Lord himself — "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all those things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

LECTURE VIII.

ABSTRACT OF LECTURES AND CONCLUDING REMARKS.

And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation. HEB. xiii. 22.

IN concluding this series of lectures, this evening, I will lay before you, as proposed, a brief abstract of the topics that have come more especially under review ; and then close with some concluding remarks. The study of the subjects embraced in the foregoing discourses, was commenced a long time ago, under a deep impression that it was the duty of public teachers of religion to give attention, as far as possible, to the whole of the Divine revelation contained in the Bible — to search the Scriptures not only for doctrines and duties, but for arguments and motives to enforce them. After the discourses were prepared, and waiting patiently till a door in providence seemed open for their delivery, it was with fear and trembling I ventured to lay them before this community ; and I thank my God that I have been permitted to proceed thus far.

The first thoughts that occurred, on entering upon the discussion, after some introductory remarks, were the uses of prophecy, and the different modes of interpreting it. On comparing the literal and figurative modes of interpretation, we saw in a number of instances, how very literally the prophecies concerning the first coming of Christ were fulfilled, and

could see no reason why those relating to his second coming might not be interpreted on the same principle.

Next, after contrasting the views of those who hold the pre-Millennial, and the post-Millennial coming of Christ, we saw how far apart they were, in regard to that solemn period, designated, "*The day of the Lord.*" On examining the passages wherein this expression occurred, we showed how in the most of these, it could not by fair interpretation, refer to the end of time. In one remarkable instance the day of the Lord, and coming of Christ, was shown to be the agency in the destruction of the "man of sin," or of Popery; and hence, unless that apostate system is allowed to continue throughout the thousand years of peace and purity, the day of the Lord, and coming of Christ must be pre-Millennial.

We were next led to consider that form of expression — "New heavens and a new earth." Here we found that those who favor the post-Millennial coming of Christ are under the necessity of interpreting it to signify sometimes the Millennial state on earth, and sometimes the state of eternal glory in heaven. We repudiated the idea of taking such liberty with such a peculiar form of expression [used by the holy spirit of inspiration. Reasoning from the connections of the passages where it occurs, we took it to denote this earth as regenerated by the fire of the coming day of the Lord, and made meet for the risen saints of the first resurrection, and changed believers; and in this view found no difficulty or contradiction in the several cases where the expression occurs.

The principal theme of the Third Lecture was, the practical influences of the pre-Millennial views; but to which we think it unnecessary here to advert.

The subject of the Fourth Lecture was the second coming of Christ. Here I quoted a number of the very many passages referring to this event, in none of which we could see any reference to the day of final retribution, or formal judgment of the wicked. I next directed attention to the Saviour's answers to the two questions of the disciples — "When shall these things be? and, what shall be the sign of thy coming, and the end of the world" — or as it should be translated, end of the age or *dispensation*. The answer to the second question, apparently commences with these words: — "Immediately after the tribulations of those days . . . shall appear the sign of the Son of Man." These tribulations were shown to be the tribulations of the Jewish nation, of which the destruction of their city was only "the beginning of sorrows;" and which have continued to the present day. But providences intimate to us a strong probability that they shall soon again possess their own land, and then their tribulations will be ended. Immediately after, look for the coming of the Son of Man, for, says the Saviour, "This generation shall not pass till all these things shall be fulfilled" — or, as it ought to be translated, *that* generation shall not pass — *that* generation which witnesses these preparatory signs just alluded to, of the present day. Hence, I concluded that some among us may live to see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory,

Next came up the subject of the First Resurrection. Here we examined the arguments in favor of a symbolical, or figurative resurrection, and found them so confused and unsatisfactory, that we gave up that view for one which the common sense of an ordinary reader might gather from the language used, viz., a literal resurrection of all the righteous dead at the coming of Christ and beginning of the thousand years ; and the resurrection of the wicked at the end of that period, to be brought to judgment before the great white throne, then erected, and there to receive their final doom. This doctrine of the first resurrection we gathered, not from that remarkable passage in Revelations only, but from a number of other passages in the New Testament.

We next examined the question concerning the restoration of the Jews. Here we showed, that the numerous prophecies respecting that event could not possibly have referred to their return from Babylonish captivity ; nor to their reception into the Gospel church. We showed that their return to their own land as a nation, would be literal, would be the termination of their tribulations, and an event contemporaneous with the expiration of the times of the Gentiles, or of the present Gospel dispensation, and day of grace to mankind. In view of the present appearances in favor of their restoration, we reasoned that that event was not far distant.

In the Last Lecture we considered some prophetic numbers and signs ; and showed that in all past time, even as far back as the flood, God had given to his servants signs, and warnings, and even definite dates

in reference to some great and solemn events of his providence; and that these were given for some practical use even before they came to pass. I stated the views of commentators in regard to the 1260 years of Papal *power* were, that that period is already expired, and Popery in the process of being consumed, awaiting the time of its destruction by the brightness of Christ's coming. I quoted some prophecies having, apparently, special reference to Turkey and Russia. All seemed to show, that there are some great periods converging to a point, viz., the exhaustion of Turkey — the restoration of Israel — the destruction of Rome — and the battle of the great day, in which the great northern power of Russia seems to appear conspicuous. It is possible they may meet in some eventful period not far separately — but of that period I had nothing to say.

What then is the conclusion of the whole matter? If these things be so, “it is high time to awake out of sleep.” If it be so that the times of the Gentiles are so nearly fulfilled — if it be so that we are that generation that shall not pass till all be fulfilled — if it be so that some of us may live to see the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the elements melting with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein burned up — what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?

In drawing these discourses to a close, I feel as if I must indulge myself in a few free and desultory remarks, expressive of my general feelings in review of the whole; and my earnest desire that they may be of

use to the several classes who have indulged me with a hearing. They have been prepared and presented under some disadvantages, but not without hope and prayer, that God, in his adorable providence and grace may, in some way, make a use of them, in promoting his kingdom and glory on earth. I remember the saying that is written 1 Cor. i. 27: "But God hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things that are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence." The work was commenced with my mind somewhat wavering on the general question, and hesitating much whether to write on it; but at the same time deeply impressed with its importance, and with the solemn responsibility of teachers of religion to search the whole Scripture, not only for doctrines and duties, but for arguments and motives to enforce them. As I proceeded, the conviction was forced upon my mind, that the view here set forth was more conformable to the Bible than the opposite, and adopted as my private sentiment. The more I studied the Scripture in this state of mind it became more and more clear, until I was quite persuaded that it ought to occupy a place in the teachings of the pulpit.

It is not assumed that all difficulties have been surmounted, nor all questions answered. There are questions arising, and objections to be met with, in connection with almost every doctrinal point of pul-

pit discussion ; but are these themes to be dismissed, because we cannot all see alike on them ? On the subject of unfulfilled prophecy, it is most reasonable to suppose there will be differences of opinion, and that some difficulties will remain. The question here is, In which view is the greatest amount of difficulty ? On the side of those who regard the Millennium as merely an expansion of the means of grace, and spiritual influences now in operation, and then to be succeeded by the coming of Christ, and the general judgment, there appear to me now difficulties insuperable. On the side of those who believe that the advent of Christ is to be pre-Millennial there are difficulties, no doubt, but they are few in comparison with those that attach to the other view. There are many things in the Bible which we cannot now explain — numerous predictions, incidents, and allusions that will be understood only as the age advances. As far as my experience goes, I am now persuaded that there is not a text but which can be reconciled with the view we have taken ; and multitudes far more consistent with it than with the popular view on the subject. It has been my aim to avoid dogmatism, and unguarded assumption. We must not decide, where God has not clearly revealed, nor calculate dates where He has given only dim indications of the nearness of the time. There is much in prophecy to cheer and encourage the trustful Christian : and at the same time, much to make us humbly wait and pray, and long for the “glorious appearing of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

And now, my dear Christian brethren, let me

freely speak to you. I cannot feel to close without one more appeal to your candor. Are you willing to live on in uncertainty and indifference on this great and solemn subject; or, after all we have said, to let it drop without further investigation? I ask you not to follow any man further than he follows the teachings of Christ: nor do I claim any further insight into it than any attentive student of the Bible may attain. I wonder, sometimes, why Christians manifest such diffidence in looking into this subject, and even about talking of it. I can see nothing attractive in the spirit of the world in these days, nor anything cheering in the aspects of the church at present, to make us content that things should go on just as they are doing. On the contrary, there is everything to excite the exclamation of the Psalmist — “Oh, that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion;” or the Apostle John — “Even so come, Lord Jesus; come quickly.” And if there be anything in Scripture, or in the signs of the times to intimate the nearness of his coming to set things right, I should think we would eagerly grasp at it as the only hope for this sin-stricken world.

I know well of some difficulties in coming to a decision, and professing belief in the doctrines set forth in these discourses. There may be, in the first place, the *fear of singularity*. But in an age like this, there is a need to be singular, if we would fully follow the instructions of Christ. With the Bible in our hand and in our heart, we need not fear the face of man. “It is a small matter to be judged of man’s judgment.” We are not among them that fix dates.

Christ may come in five, or in ten, or in twenty years ; but it will be “ in an hour when ye think not.” I feel sorry for those who venture to fix dates. There is some truth in their system, but in this they grievously err. It may be the “tempter hath tempted them in this,” and deluded some earnest souls, in order to bring discredit on the whole system, even as he tried to bring the doctrine of Paul and Silas into disrepute, by bringing out the testimony of the spirit of divination in their favor. He hates the light, and his great aim is to keep Christians in darkness and uncertainty on some points, and make them put far away the decisive day. The ardent faith of early Christians led them to think that the day of the Lord was imminent, when they saw, as they thought, the signs which Christ foretold, in the tribulations of their day. But Paul set them right by informing them that the great apostacy must first intervene. But now, since that apostacy has been fully developed, and drawing near its end, that special warning is not now applicable. Were the inspired apostle to speak now, it would be in quite a different tone from then. It is not we who fix dates, but those who say that Christ will come at the end of the thousand years. I am sometimes met, in conversation, with the strong assertion — “He will not come in your day nor mine.” Now, this is saying what neither man nor angel has a right to say. I say, I know not the “day nor the hour.” If it can be decided, at the time when the Millennium shall have commenced, then we should be able to calculate when it shall terminate, and when Christ shall come to judge the world. In

that case, the earnest and oft-repeated exhortation to “*watch*” would not be appropriate. Then we might appropriately be instructed to *wait*, but not to watch. There is a difference in waiting and watching. We wait for an event which we know is in the distant future. We watch for one, of which we know not the date, and which may be near.

There is another difficulty or objection that will cling to the mind of the warm-hearted Christian, that is, the generally received opinion, that all the nations of the world must be converted before Christ comes to close the present dispensation and day of grace. You cannot bear to think of the Gospel day terminating so soon, while yet six hundred millions of our fellow beings are spiritually strangers to the way of Salvation. I met this objection at some length, showing there was no argument in it, from the fact that the whole world once perished, with the exception of only “eight persons.” You think there is a power in the Gospel to convert the whole world ; and that it is promised and predicted that it will accomplish this. But I showed there was no such promise. All that is promised or predicted is this — the Gospel must be “*published* in all the world for a *witness* to all nations,” before the end comes. I showed you to what a wonderful extent this prediction has already been accomplished ; and that there are movements in the world now for opening up a way for the Gospel such as never were known before. I remarked further, that with the present facilities for publishing the Gospel, a few years may accomplish more than fifty years in times past. So that, upon

the whole, you may perceive that there is no force nor argument in this objection against the speedy approach of the scenes we have contemplated in these lectures. It is true, I have felt the force of this objection in the course of their study : And even now the question sometimes rises, whether these views do come in collision with the encouragements and excitements to action held out on missionary platforms. But then, I think again, that our feelings and desires, in regard to the world's conversion, are not the rule for the divine procedure. Were it the fact that these views had a tendency to slacken our missionary efforts, I would be afraid to publish them ; but, soberly considered, they have no such tendency, but rather the contrary. If the time be short, the greater the stimulus for exertion ; and if attended with self-denial, how great the encouragement that the season of rest and full reward is at hand.

But again, I am aware of the force of prejudices arising from early education and habits of thinking, on this subject, that are not easily got over. These will cling to us in view of particular passages of Scripture which we have been accustomed to regard as clearly teaching that the second coming will not be until the end of time, and consummation of all things. I will mention one, as occurring at present, which I have not noted in the course of lectures, and which, perhaps, you have thought conclusive, that Christ will not come till the end of the Millennium, Acts iii. 20. " And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you ; whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all

things, which God hath spoken by the mouths of all the holy prophets." Now, it appears to me, that "the times of restitution of all things," is an awkward expression to denote his coming to judge the world, and take his people up to heaven at the end of time. Restitution conveys the idea of restoring all things to their original state, before sin defaced the works of God. When he comes to make new heavens and a new earth — to destroy death and sin, and confine Satan — to purify the earth, and people it with holy inhabitants — so that the world shall end as it began — with Paradise — that will be a restitution of all things.

But I have done with reasoning now; our appeal is to your hearts. Oh! brethren, there is much in this view to wean you from the world, and sanctify your nature, and make you meet for his coming whenever that may be. If you embrace it, it will tinge your whole conversation. It will send you to searching the Scripture for a clearer understanding of what the will of God is. You will listen with more heart-felt interest to the instructions of Christ. To you his oft-repeated command is "*watch*." Be anxious about the time of his coming; but far more anxious about personal preparation for it. Watch against being surprised; watch against dereliction of duty; watch and be ready, by being sure you are on the right ground. Stand on the rock of ages; your loins girt and your lamps burning; Christ's righteousness your title; Christ's name your watchword; and come what may, neither your hope, nor your position can be overturned.

May I be permitted a word in parting to the careless and unconcerned? Dear fellow sinners, almost every time I sit down to write a passage, your case occurs to my mind. There is great danger in your case, and much unhappiness. Oh what a pleasure to have a good hope in Christ! But that pleasure is not yours. It is comparatively easy to get along now, in company with so many of your own way of thinking. But this state of things will not last. You will have lonely hours in sickness, and you will have to die alone. Unless you have a change of heart, it will be a dark and gloomy passage down to the gates of death; and then, O what an eternity will be yours!

But, if you have followed me through these lectures you may perceive that it may not be yours to die the common death of men. You may live to see “the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of earth mourn when they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” This is the event to which I have been endeavoring to direct the minds of my hearers. “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels of heaven.” I have been reasoning from Scripture, and from history, and from Providences that it is near. It will take the world by surprise. “For as it was in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the *day* that Noah entered the ark, and knew not till the flood came and took them all away.

So shall the coming of the Son of Man be." Dear hearers, think of these words, "they *knew not*." Why did they not know it? Noah declared it to them—but they would not believe. Even so it is now! Multitudes, in spite of all the knowledge of an educated age: in spite of all this stirring prophecy of our Lord Jesus Christ: in spite of all the means of grace, and constant warnings and invitations of God's ministers: in spite of all the wonders that shall take place: they *will not know*, till the sign of the Son of Man is seen in heaven: and then it will be, as before the flood, too late. You may live to see these wonders—to see the graves opening, and the dead in Christ rising first, and living saints caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air. You may live to witness the heart-rending separations that will take place, for how does our Lord's prophecy proceed? "There shall be two in the field, the one shall be taken and the other left." The one shall be *taken*—taken where?—taken up to meet the Lord in the air. This is the antecedent—the thing he was just speaking of in the same discourse, about the angels gathering the elect. The one shall be taken and the other *left*." Left to what? To perish in the flames of a world on fire! Oh! what partings will be there. What agony of feeling for a moment—but only for a moment—even among the righteous, to see some loved ones left? But worse far on the other side, to see those whom they loved taken up to meet the Lord, and themselves left behind in a world now bereft of all the righteous, who were the salt of the earth to preserve it, and none but the wicked left on it, as being now ripe for destruction! Oh! if these things be reali-

ties, let me put it to you, why should any of you hesitate whether you shall be among the taken or the left. Why is it when precious atoning blood is offered, and a glorious Saviour is preached to you, and an instant welcome addressed to the worst and vilest of sinners — why should you die? Why perish? Why not be saved? When I ask you to be Christians, I ask you to be happy. Allow me to speak from experience. I know what the Gospel is; and I am perfectly convinced that no man can be happy even in this world, who has not a personal interest in the Son of God. It is only when you can lift your hearts and say: The rock of ages is my trust — the great God my Father — the Lamb upon the throne my Saviour — that you can welcome death, and even the wreck of nature, and the crash of worlds.

If I might be permitted a word to brethren in the ministry, I would say, that I know also by experience, something of the difficulties, trials, and anxieties in your case. You are surrounded by multitudes of careless and impenitent souls, and you lament over their continued indifference. You have lukewarm and worldly-minded professors to deal with, and all you can say don't seem to wean them from their idolatrous attachment to the things of time and sense. You have the dear children of God to build up in holy faith, and wonder after all that they make so little progress in holiness. You are aware that it takes a higher power than the force of human eloquence to convert and sanctify souls. And you can appeal, I trust, to the Searcher of hearts, for the uprightness and purity of your motives. To what then shall we

attribute the appalling apathy in the world, and in the church too, which we witness? O Brethren! the times in which we live require that we too need to scrutinize our hearts still more thoroughly, as in the sight of God. We are not above the influence of temptation to time-serving, and ministering to the tastes of the day. The time has come when they will not endure sound doctrine; and the fear of man bringeth a snare. I feel as if the smooth things, and ornamental style that are sought after, are scarcely compatible with the message we have to deliver. Something is wanted, more calculated to rouse to decided action. We have Providences, as well as the Word of God, to consult; and are not the aspects of the world at present, viewed in the light of Scripture and prophecy, enough to alarm the thoughtful. As Scripture throws light on providences, so, on the other hand, the latter throw light on the former. When prayerfully considered, they mutually assist in comprehending the subject gone over in these discourses. If there be truth — if there be Scripture in the view I have taken — and I can see nothing to contradict it — is it not right that the careless world, and the slumbering church, who neither search the Scriptures nor study prophecy, be made aware of them. I know somewhat by experience, your feeling on this point also. You find so much to do in awakening the careless to a sense of their danger, and in training them in the doctrines and duties of the Gospel, that you find no time to study prophecy, and leave that to minds more at leisure. But is not this a part of “the whole counsel of God,” that is to be declared? What

if these signs, presented in the providences of God, be the very means he now designs to use in awakening a slumbering world? It may be, that the view I have presented is the very motive the Spirit of God wants us to urge, in order to bless it to the edification of his church. What if there be some miscalculation, the subject is never out of place. You are not backward to remind them of the day of judgment. But do you know when that will take place? Are you sure, that the awful and final separation lies away off in the far distant future? The coming of Christ is a Scriptural motive. It is the one always used by the Apostles, and why is it now so overlooked? What motive more animating to the wakeful Christian? and what more awakening to the careless worldling? They will not like it, and may scarcely bear it; but, “we must speak to them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.”

In conclusion, my prayer now is — That the Lord may grant unto us, and to all who have listened to these discourses, understanding in all things — that we may stand in our lot in the end of the days — and that we “Despise not prophesyings: but prove all things, and hold fast that which is good.”

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